

GURDJIEFF AND HYPNOSIS
A Hermeneutic Study

MOHAMMAD H. TAMDGIDI
Foreword by J. Walter Driscoll



GURDJIEFF AND HYPNOSIS

by the same author
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“Tamdgidi sets a benchmark for Gurdjieff Studies in relation to two recognized but insufficiently explored areas, his writings as a unified field and his exploitation of hypnosis in its broadest sense. His compact interpretation of Gurdjieff emphasizes—for the first time—a search for meaning based on recognizable keys within about 1,800 pages of Gurdjieff’s four texts as a single body of work, with particular focus on subliminal and subconscious dimensions of impact and interpretation, an approach which might be termed the ‘Hermeneutics of Gurdjieff.’ Thus, Tamdgidi’s work is an important original contribution to the constructive, independent, and critical study of Gurdjieff’s four books. Anyone who has seriously attempted to read *Beelzebub’s Tales* or *Meetings with Remarkable Men* can vouch for their intentionally beguiling or ‘hypnotic’ effect. These readers will appreciate Tamdgidi’s interpretive virtuosity and focus—he keeps each tree and the entire forest in sight throughout.”

—From the Foreword by J. Walter Driscoll, independent scholar and bibliographer; editor and contributing author, *Gurdjieff: A Reading Guide*, 3rd Ed. (2004); contributing editor, *Gurdjieff International Review* (1997–2001); co-author, *Gurdjieff: An Annotated Bibliography* (1985)

“A wondrous odyssey and extraordinary argumentation! Nothing in the corpus of writings on Gurdjieff’s works goes near to matching this masterful reading.

Each time one looks back into the text, one finds more gold, no dross.”

—Paul Beekman Taylor, Professor Emeritus at the University of Geneva, and author of *G. I. Gurdjieff: A New Life*; *Gurdjieff’s Invention of America*; *The Philosophy of G. I. Gurdjieff*; *Gurdjieff & Orage: Brothers in Elysium*; and *Shadows of Heaven: Gurdjieff and Toomer*

“In the ocean of literature on Gurdjieff, the brilliant book of Mohammad Tamdgidi has a very special place. It is the first serious academic attempt at a hermeneutics of Gurdjieff’s texts, taking as key the core of Gurdjieff’s teaching—the enneagram. Of course, Gurdjieff’s teaching cannot be understood apart from its practice. But it is also true that this teaching cannot be understood without a rigorous study of the writings of Gurdjieff himself.”

—Basarab Nicolescu, author of *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*

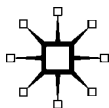
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Printed in the United States of America.

for my beloved
father Mohammed (Ahad) Tamjidi (1930–2007)
and mother Tayyebah Tamjidi

It all ended thus, that I decided to take an oath before my own essence, in a state of mind known to me, never again to make use of this property of mine.

I must also mention that, when I took the oath not to apply in life this inherency of mine, I made a reservation that my oath should not concern the application of it for scientific purposes. (L:26)

—Gurdjieff, **Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am”**

“And in doing this, they criticize exactly that humble and honest learned being of their planet [Mesmer], who, if he had not been pecked to death would have revived that science, which alone is absolutely necessary to them and by means of which alone, perhaps, they might be saved from the consequences of the properties of the organ Kundabuffer.” (B:562)

—Gurdjieff, **Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson**

At the close of this [film titled “Two Brothers”], what I should call, “general hypnotic-process” in order to fix firmly some formerly suggested ideas, I, “hobbling” and supported by my companions, returned to the Cafe de la Paix, which later became my Paris “office”, and regaining my calm, began to form in my mind the outline of the scenario which I have called “The Three Brothers.” (H:43–4)

—Gurdjieff, **The Herald of Coming Good**

This procedure, as was evident when I later understood it, was an extremely original means for development of the mind and for self-perfecting.

They called it kastousilia, a term derived, it seems to me, from the ancient Assyrian, and which my father evidently took from some legend.

This procedure was as follows:

One of them would unexpectedly ask the other a question, apparently quite out of place, and the other, without haste, would calmly and seriously reply with logical plausibility. ...

These questions and answers were carried on in a serious and quiet tone as though one of them were asking the price of potatoes today and the other replying that the potato crop was very poor this year. Only later did I understand what rich thoughts were concealed beneath such questions and answers. (M:38)

—Gurdjieff, **Meetings with Remarkable Men**

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ABBREVIATIONS

- B (or *Beelzebub*) *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson: An Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man (All and Everything, First Series)*
- M (or *Meetings*) *Meetings with Remarkable Men (All and Everything, Second Series)*
- L (or *Life*) *Life Is Real Only Then, When “I Am” (All and Everything, Third Series)*
- H (or *Herald*) *The Herald of Coming Good*

FOREWORD

G. I. Gurdjieff (circa 1870 to 1949) remains as enigmatic as the inscriptionless and inscrutable pair of dolmans which have guarded his family plot in Fontainebleau for sixty years. A polyglot and privately tutored autodidactic from obscure Greek-Armenian parentage in the Russian occupied southern slopes of the Caucasus of the late nineteenth century, he emerged as a self-vaunting and unorthodox yet remarkably able choreographer, composer, hypnotherapist, memoirist, mythologist, novelist, philosopher, and psychologist.

Gurdjieff tells us that by the mid 1890s his expeditionary band called 'Seekers of Truth' was engaged in scientific missions and monastic pilgrimages in remote regions of Central Asia, that his practical knowledge of hypnotism was deepening and that he had begun to give himself out "to be a 'healer' of all kinds of vices" (H:20). After more than a decade spent honing his discoveries in Europe, Africa, Russia and Central Asia, he adopted—as he characterized it—the "artificial life" of a hypnotist-magus around 1911–1912 (H:11–13, 63, 68). His avowed purpose in the twenty-one year undertaking that followed was to understand "the aim of human life" (H:1), to attract sufficient followers of every human type as subjects for observation and experiment and

upon whom he hoped to depend for their services as musicians, dancers, artists and writers to verify and promote his auspicious system (H:22–24).

Gurdjieff brashly stormed the stages of Europe and America between the early 1920s and the mid 1930s, cloaked in his adopted Svengali mystique of “tricks, half-tricks, and real supernatural phenomena” (Nott 1961:15)—including perhaps a sound psycho-spiritual teaching for posterity. The dramatic performances with his dance troupe and brassy orchestra made headlines in Paris, London, New York and Chicago. By the early 1940s Gurdjieff had garnered sufficient financial credit among his Paris admirers to quietly operate a neighborhood soup-kitchen from his “back staircase” (Tchekhovitch 2006:198–99) and survive the Nazi occupation of Paris. Immediately following World War II his American and British flocks gathered in Gurdjieff’s small Paris apartment to endure plate-in-hand standing-room-only dinners and rounds of “Idiot” toasts. Then they sat or squatted in the living room past the wee hours for interminable oral readings of his then unpublished space odyssey *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*. These festive pedagogical occasions with Gurdjieff ended at his death on October 29, 1949 (Moore 1991:316).

Gurdjieff should have been forgotten by now, or perhaps recalled only in occasional footnotes such as the following typical gossip about him, recorded in the joint 1920s memoir of Robert McAlmon and Kay Boyle¹—two expatriate American writers in Paris when Eliot, Hemingway, Joyce, Mansfield, Pound, Williams, and a host of major English-language authors frequented café tables. Boyle recounts that one afternoon in 1923 at the Café de la Paix, while Gurdjieff sat at an adjacent table, she, McAlmon, and their host Harold Loeb heard an anonymous young American (who had visited a friend at Gurdjieff’s Institute at the Prieuré) say:

[Gurdjieff’s] cult has been spreading among people I thought were more or less sensible ... Jane Heap, Margaret Anderson and Georgette Leblanc got involved ... (I [Kay Boyle] remembered then that it was there that Katherine Mansfield died.). It’s a mass hypnotism of some kind. Gurdjieff started years back in the East as a hypnotist ... In their state of half starvation and overwork, they don’t care to think or feel on their own. They live on their hallucinations.

The sinister, manipulative and exploiting hypnotist Svengali was a character invented by George du Maurier (1834–1896) in his 1894 melodrama, *Tribly*. A retiring amateur hypnotist and not particularly notable British writer, Du Maurier was overwhelmed by unwelcome public attention when the book created an international sensation and became

1. Robert McAlmon and Kay Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together: 1920–1930*, revised with supplementary chapters and afterword by Kay Boyle (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984:85–87).

perhaps the best-selling English-language novel of the nineteenth century. It portrays the sweet hapless Trilby as an innocent, warm-hearted artist's model who, hypnotically seduced into marriage with the spectral conductor Svengali, becomes his zombie song-bird. Representing the quintessence of mesmeric entrapment and hypnosis run-amuck—then dominant topics of salon debate—the characters of Svengali and Trilby were, by the turn of the century, galvanized into iconic archetypes for Victorian-Edwardian preoccupations with the dark forces of the unconscious, repressed sexuality, and occultist esotericism.²

Trajectories of both Gurdjieff and the stereotype of Svengali dovetailed during the decades between 1890–1910. By the time Gurdjieff had established his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at Fontainebleau in France and sufficiently trained his troupe of talented and disciplined performers (1919–1922), the image of Svengali was a firm fixture in the minds of their European and American audiences. Did Gurdjieff simply exploit the stereotype or fall prey to it? Both? Neither? In any case, Gurdjieff was no 'one-trick-pony' to be dismissed by history as simply another sordid Svengali. The timeliness and inherent power of his music, dances, writings, practices and ideas sustained small groups of dedicated disciples who systematically, and often behind the scenes, promoted the study of Gurdjieff. This, despite the fact that many of these followers were irrevocably alienated from 'the master' by his ruthlessly compassionate—and sometimes dramatically staged—dismissals and uncompromising demands; is it naïve oversimplification to think these confrontations were simply hard lessons in deprogramming to wean them from his charismatic presence?

I have had the good fortune and privilege to become a welcome spectator and commentator as Dr. Tamdgidi expanded on and transformed the study of Gurdjieff in his 2002 Ph.D. dissertation, "Mysticism and Utopia." The original, elucidating book that has emerged and which you hold in hand sets a benchmark for Gurdjieff Studies in relation to two recognized but insufficiently explored areas, his writings as a unified field and his exploitation of hypnosis in its broadest sense. Tamdgidi applies a hermeneutic approach to Gurdjieff's writings, with a particular focus on Gurdjieff's pervasive exploitation of hypnotic technique which was figurative and literal as well as literary. Tamdgidi's study is primarily

2. For a thorough account of the trans-Atlantic Svengali phenomena generated by du Maurier's 1894 *Trilby*, see Daniel Pick's *Svengali's Web: The Alien Enchanter in Modern Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). By an odd quirk of history, in November 1934 the remains of A. R. Orage, then recently retired as Gurdjieff's foremost English disciple and editor, were interred in the same cemetery as those of George du Maurier, at St. John's-at-Hampstead Churchyard.

interpretive, literary (without being pedantic), textual and psychological rather than simply historical and biographical, although these last two domains are also significant in his penetrating analysis.

Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation, the avenues by which we arrive at an understanding of or derive meaning from the object of our attention and examination. Traditionally, hermeneutics developed around the study of scripture as each of the major religions emerged; later it was more generally applied to the study of both classical and modern literature. The term is derived from Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* (On Interpretation) and evokes obvious associations with the Olympian Greek god Hermes, the winged-sandaled, caduceus brandishing messenger of the gods. Hermes sometimes escorts the dead and thus is one of only four gods—the others being Hecate, Hades, and Persephone—who have unhindered right-of-passage in-and-out of the Underworld. At folkloric levels, Hermes is patron of interpreters, translators, travellers, and the boundaries they cross in order to communicate with aliens. On his darker side, Hermes is associated with the watcher-at-night and whatever can go amiss on the travellers' road, such as cunning thieves-at-the-gate.

Hermeneutic studies vary widely in attributing primacy of meaning to either the author's or artist's intent, the subjects covered or media employed, and each reader's or viewer's right to interpretation via whatever school of thought they favour—historical, etymological, textual, psychological, symbolic, etc. At its highest levels, hermeneutics involves the search for meaning via numinous interpretation, be it of poetry, scripture, philosophy, literature, music, art, law or architecture. It is both fitting and timely that Tamdgidi draws for inspiration on *all* his relevant hermeneutic options in search of meaning in Gurdjieff's ideas and writings. Gurdjieff's four distinct books are the product of a self-styled message-bearer of the 'messengers of the gods,' a twentieth-century spinner of tales about His ENDLESSNESS, Beelzebub, life on Earth, and 'all and everything' between these, including a singular cosmology and psychology. Tamdgidi's compact interpretation of Gurdjieff emphasizes—for the first time—a search for meaning based on recognizable keys within about 1,800 pages of Gurdjieff's four texts as a single body of work, with particular focus on subliminal and subconscious dimensions of impact and interpretation, an approach that might be termed the 'Hermeneutics of Gurdjieff.'

During the past sixty years, an enormous and ever-expanding literature has emerged about Gurdjieff, a good deal of it anecdotal, expository or apologetic—and too much of it biased, fictitious and/or ideological. Too little of the literature is independent or (dare one add) intelligently critical. And, despite the amount published *about* Gurdjieff or expositions of his ideas based on secondary sources, few writers offer significant or systematic analyses of Gurdjieff's own writings. Thus, Tamdgidi's work is an important

original contribution to the constructive, independent, and critical study of Gurdjieff's four books. He presents abundant evidence for his arguments via a thorough, thoughtful examination of *The Herald of Coming Good* (1933), *All and Everything: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (1950), *Meetings With Remarkable Men* (1963), and *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"* (1978). Drawing on copious citations from these books, Tamdgidi assembles a chronology of Gurdjieff's life, simultaneously providing a detailed examination of Gurdjieff's cosmology, psychology, and an examination of the nine-pointed "enneagram," a unique symbol Gurdjieff developed to encapsulate the 'universal laws' that frame his mytho-cosmology, his epistemology and his psychology.

Anyone who has seriously attempted to read *Beelzebub's Tales* or *Meetings with Remarkable Men* can vouch for their intentionally beguiling or 'hypnotic' effect. These readers will appreciate Tamdgidi's interpretive virtuosity and focus—he keeps each tree *and* the entire forest in sight throughout. Tamdgidi's study will prove challenging for those who have not read Gurdjieff but it will also encourage them to seek their own verification and follow Gurdjieff's seemingly pompous but truly "Friendly Advice" about trying to "fathom the gist" of his writings. His counsel is posted facing the Contents page of *Beelzebub's Tales*, and concludes:

Read each of my written expositions thrice ... Only then will you be able to count upon forming your own impartial judgement, proper to yourself alone, on my writings. And only then can my hope be actualized that according to your understanding you will obtain the specific benefit for yourself which I anticipate, and which I wish for you with all my being.

J. Walter Driscoll
 Vancouver Island on the Pacific
 June 29, 2009

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PROLOGUE

I learned that the boy in the middle was a Yezidi, that the circle had been drawn round him and that he could not get out of it until it was rubbed away. The child was indeed trying with all his might to leave this magic circle, but he struggled in vain. I ran up to him and quickly rubbed out part of the circle, and immediately he dashed out and ran away as fast as he could. ... This so dumbfounded me that I stood rooted to the spot for a long time as if bewitched, until my usual ability to think returned. Although I had already heard something about these Yezidis, I had never given them any thought; but this astonishing incident, which I had seen with my own eyes, now compelled me to think seriously about them. ... The Yezidis are a sect living in Transcaucasia, mainly in the regions near Mount Arafat. They are sometimes called devil-worshippers.

—M:65–66

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1872?–1949) was an enigmatic Transcaucasian mystic philosopher and teacher who has been widely acknowledged for having introduced to the West during the early twentieth century a new teaching that significantly influenced contemporary spirituality.

Gurdjieff is known—through the famous work of his senior early pupil P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (1949), detailing an absorbing account of his conversations with Gurdjieff—for having introduced a rational interpretation and synthesis of Eastern mysticism more accessible to the Western mind.

Paradoxically, however, Gurdjieff made every effort in his own writings to build a seemingly impenetrable and mystifying edifice for it.

Consequently, much of the knowledge about Gurdjieff's teaching, and even about his life, needs to be untangled and defragmented by deciphering the meanings concealed beneath the symbolic architecture of all his texts. This furnishes the rationale for conducting fresh and independent explorations of his life and teaching by adopting a hermeneutic approach to the study of his writings. The hermeneutic approach encompasses the intentions both to conduct an indepth textual analysis and to interpret the text using its *own* symbolic and meaning structures.

My aim in this study is to shed new light on Gurdjieff's life and teaching in general and his lifelong interest in and practice of hypnosis in particular, through a hermeneutic study of all four of his published writings. I especially explore his "objective art"¹ of literary hypnotism intended as a major conduit for the transmission of his teachings on the philosophy, theory, and practice of personal self-knowledge and harmonious human development. In the process I explain the nature and function of the mystical shell hiding the rational kernel of his teaching—thus clarifying why his mysticism is "mystical," and Gurdjieff so "enigmatic," in the first place. I also argue that, from his own point of view, Gurdjieff's lifelong preoccupation with hypnosis was not an end in itself or merely aimed at advancing his personal fame and fortune, but mainly served his efforts to develop and spread his teaching in favor of human spiritual awakening and harmonious development.

The study raises and examines various issues related to Gurdjieff's teaching and life that can also provide substantial material of interest for cross-fertilization of other studies of Gurdjieff as well as those in literature, psychology, hypnotism, mysticism, and religion in general in both academic and non-academic settings. It can be used to further explore the dynamics of mystical schools and teachings, especially in regard to spiritual conditioning, cult behavior, and dynamics of teacher-pupil relations in

1. By "real, *objective art*" (Ouspensky 1949:27) Gurdjieff means a kind of art whose effect on its target audience is precise, predictable, and reproducible with scientific accuracy; it consciously and intentionally affects not only the intellectual but especially the emotional (feeling) sides of its target audience. This is in contrast to "subjective art" where the art may not produce any of its predicted and intended results and impressions on its target audience. "Ancient" objective art—many examples of which Gurdjieff cites, such as the great Sphinx of Egypt, a strange figure on the foot of the Hindu Kush, etc. (Ibid.)—may also contain "inexactitudes," in terms of intentional deviations from what were regarded as lawful patterns; deciphering such inexactitudes by later generations could render insights about the messages consciously and intentionally hidden by the ancients for their posterity. Gurdjieff's clearly explicated aim in affecting not only the mind but also the emotions of his readers (B:4, 24–25), along with his purposeful hiding of various meanings in his writings (M:6, 38), are certainly characteristics that he associates with objective art. But how his "objective art" of literary hypnotism is devised and works are what this study aims to illuminate.

small group settings. As such, it aims to mark a critical *and* appreciative note in Gurdjieff Studies and constructively contribute to the enrichment of spiritual work among those independently attracted to Gurdjieff's teaching and perhaps also those associated with its official institutions.

It is important to note here that this study is not concerned with evaluating the effectiveness of Gurdjieff's hypnotic techniques and powers per se, but with substantiating the proposition that he indeed was consciously, intentionally, and systematically preoccupied with and practiced hypnotism *throughout* his life, including, and especially so, during his career as a writer and through his writings. I believe the study of Gurdjieff from this vantage point can shed important light not only on his life and teaching, but also on the hypnotic nature of other religious and literary texts.

Another limitation of this study has to do with its focus on Gurdjieff's *published* writings. Of the four major works of Gurdjieff published to date, only *The Herald of Coming Good* was published and soon withdrawn (by Gurdjieff) from circulation in 1933 during his lifetime. The galley proofs of the First Series, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, were inspected and approved by Gurdjieff before his passing in 1949, but the book was formally published in 1950 after his death and reprinted several times since, with a revision appearing in 1992 and 2006. Given the controversy² surrounding the unaccountable revisions made to the original 1950 edition of the First

2. According to Gurdjieff Studies bibliographer and scholar J. Walter Driscoll (personal communication on March 28, 2009):

In 1992, after four decades of in-house debate, the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York (under their imprint, Triangle Editions, Inc.), issued an adaptation of the First Series, with no indication of its purpose, methods or sources—only the statement, “This revision of the English translation first published in 1950 has been revised by a group of translators under the direction of Jeanne de Salzmann.”

The adapted translation is in late twentieth-century colloquial American English. At approximately 1135 pages (circa 335400 words), it is about 6.5% (circa 23200 words, about 65 pages) shorter than the early twentieth-century British prose original finalized by Gurdjieff and published in 1950 with 1238 pages (circa 358600 words). In places, the revision departs radically from the original English edition; it apparently draws on the Russian manuscript and on Jeanne de Salzmann's French translation of 1956. In 2006, a “second edition” appeared, containing unspecified “further revisions” and a four-page “Editors' Note” which avoids well-documented accounts of Gurdjieff's attentive philological supervision of his English edition, particularly with Olga de Hartmann. Fluent in Russian and English, de Hartmann “was certain that Orage's translation was very exact. Finally, after many attempts, Mr. Gurdjieff was satisfied” (Hartmann and Hartmann 1992:240–41).

Triangle Editions' anonymous editorial team dismisses the original 1950 English edition as “awkward ... unwieldy ... needlessly complex and, for many readers, extremely difficult to read and understand.” They assure readers that Gurdjieff “could not have judged, much less approved the English text” for its 1950 publication, and rush to promote the stylistic and linguistic changes which “Mme de Salzmann ... left them to complete.”

Series in the 1992 (and the latter's 2006 reprint) adaptation, the present study will use the first, 1950, edition of the First Series for its textual analysis. The Second Series (*Meetings with Remarkable Men*) of Gurdjieff's writings was published posthumously by Gurdjieff's pupils in 1960 in French and in 1963 in English while his Third Series (*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*) was first published privately in English in 1975 and then publicly in 1978 and reprinted in 1991. The extent to which the published material of all of Gurdjieff's writings correspond to or diverge from the manuscripts left by Gurdjieff, and whether there are other pieces of unpublished writings by Gurdjieff, are important questions to explore. However, such a task is beyond the scope and purpose of this study, which is limited to the hermeneutic study of Gurdjieff's published writings.

Other limitations of this study in regard to its focus (besides the page limit set by the publisher for the book) have to do with engagements with the literature on hypnotism in general and with the secondary literature in Gurdjieff Studies in particular.³ The present study is not concerned with how Gurdjieff's views on and practice of hypnotism compare to those contained in the past or present literature on and practices of hypnosis and hypnotism. I am mainly concerned here with the in-and-of-itself enormous task of hermeneutic deciphering of Gurdjieff's own interpretation and practice of hypnotism as reflected in and transmitted through his writings. I believe that the integral study of all of Gurdjieff's own writings with a

3. I must further add here that limitations of space and focus do not also allow me to elaborate in this study on the sociological and social psychological significance of Gurdjieff's ideas and their relevance to liberatory social theorizing and practice. Some efforts in this regard may be found in my other writings, including: "The Simultaneity of Self and Global Transformations: Bridging with Anzaldúa's Liberating Vision" (forthcoming); "Utopistics and the Asiatic Modes of Liberation: Gurdjieffian Contributions to the Sociological Imaginations of Inner and Global World-Systems" (2009); "From Uopistics to Utopistics: Integrative Reflections on Potential Contributions of Mysticism to World-Systems Analyses and Praxes of Historical Alternatives" (2008a); *Advancing Utopistics: The Three Component Parts and Errors of Marxism* (2007a); "Abu Ghraib as a Microcosm: The Strange Face of Empire as a Lived Prison" (2007b); "Anzaldúa's Sociological Imagination: Comparative Applied Insights into Utopystic and Quantal Sociology" (2006) revised and published as "I Change Myself, I Change the World: Gloria Anzaldúa's Sociological Imagination in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*" (2008b); "Orientalist and Liberating Discourses of East-West Difference: Revisiting Edward Said and the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam" (2005b); "Freire Meets Gurdjieff and Rumi: Toward the Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Oppressive Selves" (2004a); "Rethinking Sociology: Self, Knowledge, Practice, and Dialectics in Transitions to Quantum Social Science" (2004b); "Mysticism and Utopia: Towards the Sociology of Self-Knowledge and Human Architecture (A Study in Marx, Gurdjieff, and Mannheim)" (2002); and *I in the World-System: Stories from an Odd Sociology Class (Selected Student Writings, Soc. 280Z: Sociology of Knowledge: Mysticism, Utopia, Science)* ([1997] 2005a). *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (2002-), founded in and published since 2002, has provided an annual forum that was inspired by my appreciative critique of Gurdjieff's work in my doctoral dissertation.

specific focus on the question of hypnosis not only has substantive merits and been long absent in Gurdjieff Studies, but also is consistent with Gurdjieff's own explicit injunctions to systematically read his writings as a whole to fathom the gist of his teaching.

Therefore, as much as I would like to explore the correlations of the findings of this study with scientific research and the vast body of literature on hypnotism, these unfortunately remain outside the scope of this book. Among such important literature, one can mention the work of noted American psychiatrist and hypnotherapist, Milton H. Erickson (2006; see also Havens 2005, and Rosen 2005) whose exploitation of indirect suggestions and confusion techniques, storytelling using metaphors, resistance, shocks, and ordeals, clearly parallel Gurdjieff's. Serious and highly creative and fascinating are also the works of Adam Crabtree (1985, 1993, 1997) whose studies of the history of Mesmerism, hypnosis, and psychological healing also include specific references to Gurdjieff's ideas on human multiplicity (though not in regard to Gurdjieff's writings as means for inducing hypnosis). Crabtree's writings provide an important historical context for understanding the rising interests of spiritual seekers such as Gurdjieff in hypnotism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe (including Russia and its environs). Also of note are the writings of prominent transpersonal psychologist Charles Tart on meditation, hypnosis, and "waking up" (1986); Tart's work has developed in intimate conversation with Gurdjieff's ideas and teaching amid those of other traditions. The works of Arthur J. Deikman (1982, 1990, 2003) on the "observing self" and of cult behavior in mystical schools and society at large are also relevant to the implications of the present study, while Robin Waterfield's *Hidden Depths: The Story of Hypnosis* (2002) provides a detailed yet accessible and wide historical coverage of its theme while recognizing the relevance of the ideas of Gurdjieff and Tart's work on the subject.

These important avenues of research will certainly enhance my study, an earlier version of which was originally advanced in 2002. I am also pleased to see the American clinical neuropsychologist and hypnotherapist Joseph A. Sandford has recently (2005) recognized the relationship between Gurdjieff, hypnosis and Erickson's techniques—see, for instance, Sandford's "Gnosis Through Hypnosis: The Role of Trance in Personal Humanitation" published in the proceedings of *The International Humanities Conference: All & Everything 2005* (59–67). Therein, Sandford acknowledges that "In reflecting on these Ericksonian techniques of hypnosis it seems to me that Gurdjieff used hypnosis more than most of us have ever realized. Gurdjieff's book, *All and Everything*, uses all of these [Ericksonian] methods . . ." (59); however, Sandford's essay is not devoted to the explication of this theme, but to an exploration of Gurdjieff's thoughts on hypnosis and the hypnotic process as presented in his writings.

Systematic studies of all of Gurdjieff's writings in relation to one another with a specific focus on the place of hypnosis in his work have therefore been basically absent in the secondary literature in Gurdjieff Studies.⁴ And this is more puzzling given the central significance accorded by Gurdjieff himself to hypnosis. Most writings on Gurdjieff have been by those affiliated with his teaching, going back to the widely published book on Gurdjieff written by P. D. Ouspensky (1949). I have not been a part of any Gurdjieff-affiliated organization, and became interested in Gurdjieff's life and writings as part of my academic research and personal interest. My personal interest began from 'repeated' viewings of the film "Meetings with Remarkable Men"—based on Gurdjieff's Second Series and directed by Peter Brook in collaboration with Gurdjieff's senior pupil, the late Jean de Salzmann. This was followed by my 'repeated' readings of Gurdjieff's four books, the volume of his talks as reported by his pupils (*Views from the Real World*, [1973] 1984), as well as various writings about him, his teaching, and his pupils. I subsequently became increasingly 'preoccupied' with his life and ideas, and contemplated 'joining' one or another Gurdjieff-affiliated group, each time postponing such efforts until 'I was ready.'

However, an unusual experience during a ten-day meditation retreat in January 1995 that was unrelated to Gurdjieff groups—though was made possible by my growing interest in mysticism following my exposure to Gurdjieff's writings—brought to my attention in a practical sense the possibility and the extent of conditioning one may subconsciously endure in

4. My basic thesis on and detailed exposition of the place of hypnosis in Gurdjieff's life and teaching was defended in 2001 and deposited with UMI as part of my doctoral dissertation in 2002. In her *Gurdjieff: The Key Concepts* (2003) Sophia Wellbeloved acknowledged that Gurdjieff's teaching as a whole may be considered as an "alternative form of hypnotism" and that for Gurdjieff "hypnotism was both the cause and the cure" (101). She also briefly recognized that Gurdjieff's use of "kindness, threats and hypnotism" as means for influencing his pupils was also echoed in Gurdjieff's text itself, "having encouraging, threatening, and spellbinding stories" (106). For anyone acquainted with all of Gurdjieff's writings it can be self-evident that Gurdjieff himself acknowledged having been deeply interested in hypnosis and hypnotism; that he was a "professional hypnotist" for some years; that he "scientifically" and "experimentally" practiced it for a while on his pupils; that he continued to practice it for the purpose of healing addiction or other ailments throughout his life; that he regarded hypnosis as both a cause and a means of healing human spiritual sleep and mechanicalness; or even that his writings contain much information *about* the above varieties of interests in and practices of hypnotism. What remains marginal, or absent—as evident, for instance, in Wellbeloved's excerpt on Gurdjieff's "Writings" (2003:226–228)—is a consideration for the proposition that Gurdjieff's writings *themselves* were conscious, intentional, and systematic efforts in literary hypnotism on the part of Gurdjieff, a thesis central to the present study and advanced in its earlier 2002 version. Wellbeloved's study, *Gurdjieff, Astrology & Beelzebub's Tales* (2002), based on her earlier doctoral dissertation and mainly focused on Gurdjieff's First Series (as evident in the book's title and noted elsewhere, e.g., p. 234), was devoted to discovering an astrological logic to Gurdjieff's First Series and did not advance a thesis in specific regard to Gurdjieff's writings as hypnotic devices.

organized spiritual practices. Three days into the meditation retreat, I not only experienced a state of mind, concentration, and attention I did not consider possible before, but also realized, using the heightened awareness achieved while drawing on my sociological training, that I was caught amid a highly sophisticated yet quite subtle mode of hypnotic conditioning being delivered, consciously or not, by the organizers of the retreat. This prompted me to try and understand during the rest of the retreat the nature of the ongoing hypnotic process at hand on the one hand, and, on the other, to devise and implement certain efforts and strategies to counter the hypnotic influence at the intellectual as well as emotional and sensual levels *while I was still at the retreat*. The nature of my experience there requires much more time and space to reflect and report on and could perhaps be the subject of another book; however, for the purpose of this study, it should suffice to note here that the experience awakened me to the possibility and the extent that I may have *already* been subjected to similar conditioning not only in relation to other cultural, including academic, traditions, but also and especially to Gurdjieff's teaching itself. It is one thing to "know" that one may be subjected to cultural conditionings of various kinds; it is another to awaken to it in a deeply shocking way.

Paradoxically, while my awareness of such conditionings in life had been heightened by reading Gurdjieff's books, at the same time I increasingly felt that I may have as well fallen asleep *to his own ideas*. In other words, I confronted the precarious state of noticing my spiritual confinements not only in life in general, but also in relation to the very teaching that had heightened my awareness to the possibility of such conditioning. In his semi-autobiographical Second Series, Gurdjieff tells of a strange incident in his childhood when he confronted a Yezidi boy, belonging to the so-called "devil-worshipping" religious sect in the region, who could not get out of a circle drawn around him unless it was partly rubbed away by others (see the epigraph to this Prologue). Now, I found myself as if inside a "Yezidi circle" that Gurdjieff, the author of *Beelzebub's Tales*, and the alleged inventor of that strange "circular" enneagram, had drawn around me and his readers through his writings, teaching, and spiritual symbol. Yet, I was also reminded of another of Gurdjieff's aphorisms—that to escape, one must first realize that one is in prison. Gurdjieff had drawn a circle, but had also rubbed away a part of it so that "the boy" could escape. Why?

My decision at that time to incorporate into my doctoral research the study of Gurdjieff along with those of Karl Marx and Karl Mannheim (respectively representing mystical, utopian, and academic traditions that had also variously shaped my thinking and life) was thus significantly fueled by a need for understanding the nature and causes of my own 'attraction' to Gurdjieff's 'enigmatic' life and teaching. In light of, and in many ways due to, these threefold personal, social, and academic interests, I soon realized

that maintenance of organizational distance from Gurdjieff-affiliated groups was substantively and methodologically significant during the conduct of the study. I will further elaborate on this issue in the Introduction.

Most studies of Gurdjieff, often carried out by those at one time or another associated with organizations following Gurdjieff's teaching, take for granted his coded words regarding his decision not to pursue his hypnotic powers following a vow he made to himself to that effect at a certain point in his life. The present study, based on a detailed analysis of Gurdjieff's own writings, challenges such (mis)interpretations of Gurdjieff's words. Rather, I argue that an appreciation of Gurdjieff's life and teaching can best be possible in consideration of (1) the extent to which he regarded the human condition of living in sleep, as a machine or a prisoner, to be a by-product of human suggestibility and propensity to habituation and hypnosis arising from the disharmonious and separate workings of the physical, intellectual, and emotional centers of the human organism, and (2) the extent to which he consciously, intentionally, and systematically continued to pursue his career as a "professional hypnotist" *through his writings*. Gurdjieff's lifelong interest in and practice of hypnosis are thereby not marginal but at the heart of his teaching, and worthy of substantial and substantive studies of which the present work is a first systematic beginning.

There is a continuing tension in this study between an effort in trying to understand a text based on Gurdjieff's indigenous meanings and an implicit and unexpressed (though real) effort on my part in not letting judgments in secondary literature on Gurdjieff interfere with a hermeneutic understanding of his work and life. I think in this sense Gurdjieff's writings are different from many "ultra esoteric" texts whose meanings remain forever hidden. According to the sociologist Ralph Slotten's "Exoteric and Esoteric Modes of Apprehension" (1977), there is not a dualism but a spectrum lying in-between esoteric-exoteric textual elements in spiritual writings. He terms such mid-range variants of hermeneutic writing as "eso-exoteric" or "exo-esoteric" in style, and in fact identifies even further, sevenfold, gradations of exotericity and esotericity in spiritual texts (202). In Gurdjieff's case, similarly, while he hides important elements of his thought in one fragment, he also offers the hidden message—often quite explicitly, candidly, even shockingly to his reader's face, in a straightforward and at times humor-laden way—in another fragment of his writings. So, there is good reason to rely on Gurdjieff's own writings and the "hermeneutic circle" of moving back and forth between the puzzling meanings of his part and whole literary symbols in order to decipher the gist of his writings. What one does with the gist discovered, however, is a different matter; certainly, one has to always maintain distance to avoid becoming trapped in the Yezidi circle of Gurdjieff's hypnotic hermeneutics, woven in the guise of his father's "*kastousilian*" (M:38) style of conversation and storytelling.

The dialectical mode of hermeneutic analysis focusing on the inner landscape and contradictions of a *weltanschauung* is in my view reasonably effective and helpful in yielding an empathetic understanding of a thinker's mind (cf. Tamdgidi 2007a). Similarly, I should note that my purpose in studying Gurdjieff's text (and biography through his text) here is to engage with Gurdjieff's life and teaching in *his own terms*, and limit the exploration to the subject of the place of hypnosis in his "scientific" and literary pursuits, rather than to delve into his personal virtues or vices—which, provided one was interested in doing so, would require much more substantial uses of secondary biographical and historical sources.

I see Gurdjieff as a multitude of selves, some Svengali-type, black magician and "devilish" perhaps, others "Ashiata Shiemashian" (as how he idealized his white magician selves), and yet others of all hues and degrees of virtuosity in between. I see all characters in Gurdjieff's literary dramaturgy as representing one way or another his own selves in a world-historical, contemporary, and utopystic dialogue with one another—his writings being, ultimately, a vast cosmological and psychological effort on his part to understand and perhaps heal his low and high selves self-confessedly caught in the Purgatory of much remorse of conscience; yet, he was hopeful in finding a way to help liberate his soul and those of his fellow "three-brained beings." It is therefore difficult (and in fact counter-Gurdjieffian) to consider whether Gurdjieff was wholly this or that, since, as his writings reveal, he himself seemed to be also much like—or perhaps unlike, that is, even more sharply polarized *and* self-conscious than—us all, a legion of I's.

According to C. Wright Mills, the sociological imagination "enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals" (1959:5). Gurdjieff's writings as a whole—especially the dialogical style and structure of all his writings in their various forms where significant public issues and meanings are intricately interwoven, as in a delicate Persian carpet, into the fabric of everyday personal conversations within and across all the "three brains" of his invented personages—present an ingenious and creative way of exploring and advancing the sociological imagination in comparative and transdisciplinary trajectories.

Gurdjieff was an ashokh. His text is not confined to the printed word, nor even to the oral tradition he left behind, but is also written in the physical movements, mental exercises, emotional dances, and the music of a legacy that radically challenges the narrow and dualistic Western notions of the self and society, and thereby sociology. His mystical tales—linking the most intimate personal troubles with ever larger, world-historical, and even cosmically-conscious, public issues concerning humanity as a whole—are highly innovative and colorful exercises in alternative Eastern sociological imaginations meeting their ultimate micro and macro horizons.

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This book emerged over the years from a work originally conceived in 1992, culminating as a part of a doctoral dissertation I defended in 2001, deposited in 2002, and subsequently revised extensively. As the deadline for depositing the thesis approached in 2002, I undertook a permissions search and contacted J. Walter Driscoll, an independent scholar from Canada and known since the 1980s for his essays, and editorial and bibliographic contributions to Gurdjieff Studies (Driscoll 1980, 1985, 1997–2004, 2002, 2004, 2007). He responded promptly, providing helpful suggestions and addresses. Subsequently, he read my thesis and invited me to post a lengthy synopsis of it on the 2004 edition of his online bibliography.

Driscoll kindly read a draft of *Gurdjieff and Hypnosis* when Palgrave solicited him to anonymously review it in early 2008. At his initiation, his editorial suggestions, insightful comments, and identity were made available and known to me by Palgrave with their contract offer. Driscoll then took much time and care to read a third draft and offer further generous rounds of knowledgeable suggestions. I am delighted that he accepted, upon my suggestion, to write a Foreword to this work and contribute a brief bibliography of Gurdjieff's English language writings (see Bibliography). Notably tolerant when others' views diverge from his, Driscoll's knowledge of Gurdjieff's writings and of the extensive related literature since almost a century ago is remarkable, and his critical feedback always constructive. However, the key findings of this study and its basic conclusions about Gurdjieff's writings and their relation to hypnosis preceded my acquaintance with Driscoll and I am solely responsible for the views expressed and for any errors and omissions that the study may contain.

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Introduction **GURDJIEFF, HYPNOSIS, AND HERMENEUTICS**

... to understand clearly the precise significance, in general, of the life process on earth of all the outward forms of breathing creatures and, in particular, of the aim of human life in the light of this interpretation.

—H:13

As a result of pursuing this method for three days, while I did not arrive at any definite conclusions, I still became clearly and absolutely convinced that the answers for which I was looking, and which in their totality might throw light on this cardinal question of mine, can only be found, if they are at all accessible to man, in the sphere of “man’s-subconscious-mentation.”

—H:18–19

I began to collect all kinds of written literature and oral information, still surviving among certain Asiatic peoples, about that branch of science, which was highly developed in ancient times and called “Mehkeness”, a name signifying the “taking-away-of-responsibility”, and of which contemporary civilisation knows but an insignificant portion under the name of “hypnotism”, while all the literature extant upon the subject was already as familiar to me as my own five fingers.

—H:19

Mysticism has traditionally been concerned with seeking human spiritual awakening from the hypnotic sleep of every day life in favor of attaining direct knowledge and/or

experience of the hidden meaning, reality, and truth of all existence (cf. Underhill [1911] 1999; Tart 1986, 1994; Bishop 1995).

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1872?–1949), of Greek-Armenian parentage, was an enigmatic Transcaucasian mystic philosopher and teacher whose life and ideas significantly influenced the rise of new religious thought and movements in the twentieth century. According to Jacob Needleman (1996; see also 1993 and 2008) “Gurdjieff gave shape to some of the key elements and directions found in contemporary spirituality” (xi), while Martin Seymour-Smith included Gurdjieff’s *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson* among the “100 Most Influential Books Ever Written” (1998:447–452). Charles Tart, a pioneer of transpersonal psychology and prominent scholar of meditation and mysticism, has called Gurdjieff “a genius at putting Eastern spiritual ideas and practices into useful forms” (1986:323), while the renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright (2004) thought of Gurdjieff as one who “seems to have the stuff in him of which our genuine prophets have been made.”¹

To contrast his own teaching from other mystical paths in pursuit of human spiritual awakening and development, Gurdjieff reportedly distinguished three traditional mystical ways of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi from one another (Ouspensky 1949:44), depending on whether the physical, the emotional, or the intellectual center of the human organism is respectively exercised as a launching ground to attain ultimate, all-round spiritual development of “man’s hidden possibilities” (47). He argued that these three one-sided ways toward self-perfection are more prone to failure since the required trainings in each take longer (thus are often unrealizable during a single lifetime) and their adepts become often vulnerable to habituating forces upon reentry into social life. In contrast, Gurdjieff reportedly advocated an alternative “fourth way” approach characterized by the parallel development of the physical, emotional, and intellectual centers of the organism not in retreat from, but amid, everyday life.

A “Gist” of Gurdjieff’s Teaching and Life

In the three series of his published writings, Gurdjieff postponed his autobiographical account until the Second Series because it served him to illustrate the philosophical material presented in the First Series. For this

1. According to psychotherapist and author Kathleen Riordan Speeth, the list of those who have been influenced by Gurdjieff’s life and ideas includes author and poet Rudyard Kipling, Black Renaissance poet Jean Toomer, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, author Margaret Anderson, author Katherine Mansfield, photographer Minor White, painter Georgia O’Keeffe, author Zona Gale, editor Gorham Munson, physicist and physiologist Moshe Feldenkreis, filmmaker Alexandro Jodorowsky, author J. N. Priestley, and director Peter Brook (Speeth 1989:117). At the end of her list Speeth adds “and a surprising number of other public figures who wish to remain nameless” (Ibid.).

reason, in the present study, and in the brief outline of Gurdjieff's life and teaching that follows, Gurdjieff's autobiography will be treated as a part of his teaching narrative rather than standing over and beyond it as contextual and "factual" material. Following the outline, I will present in this Introduction the justifications for and issues raised by adopting a hermeneutic approach to the study of Gurdjieff's writings.

As is evident in the epigraph to this Introduction, for Gurdjieff answering the "cardinal question" of the sense and purpose of organic and human life (and death) on Earth was closely interlinked with the exploration of human subconsciousness on the one hand, and the (ancient) science and practice of hypnotism on the other. The whole "system" of ideas and practices that Gurdjieff formulated and spread by means of his teaching, in other words, can be considered as an effort to highlight and address the interlinkages of the above three dimensions of his search.

The basic ideas of Gurdjieff's teaching may thus be stated as follows:

1-Human life as the *potentially* evolving part of organic life on Earth is a mechanically (automatically) operating cosmic apparatus that provides a fertile ground for the *possibility* of conscious and intentional evolution of at least some human individuals toward immortal union with God;

2-Human "subconscious-mentation"—made possible by the "three-brained" fragmentation of the human "individual" organism into separate and independently functioning physical, emotional, and intellectual centers underlying a multiplicity of selves manifested as diverse personalities—is the mechanism that allows human beings to remain in a perpetual state of hypnotic sleep, enslaved to and imprisoned in life, in order to serve the needs of the cosmic apparatus of which they are a part;

3-Through teacher-guided and multi-faceted, harmonizing work on oneself amid everyday life aimed at blending one's fragmented centers, consciousnesses, and personalities into a whole subordinated to a singular, essential master "I" (with "real conscience"), one can awaken to the reality of the meaning of one's and others' purposes of life and inevitable physical death, die to the "egoism" that lies at the root of one's hypnotic attachments to the Earthly life, and thus escape from the cycles of mechanical life and death toward "imperishable" union with God.

Gurdjieff expresses in his writing this "gist" of his teaching as follows:

Such is the ordinary average man—an unconscious slave of the whole entire service to all-universal purposes, which are alien to his own personal individuality.

He may live through all his years as he is, and as such be destroyed for ever.

But at the same time Great Nature has given him the possibility of being not merely a blind tool of the whole of the entire service to these all-universal objective purposes but, while serving Her and actualizing what is

foreordained for him—which is the lot of every breathing creature—of working at the same time also for himself, for his own egotistic individuality.

This possibility was given also for service to the common purpose, owing to the fact that, for the equilibrium of these objective laws, such relatively liberated people are necessary.

Although the said liberation is possible, nevertheless whether any particular man has the chance to attain it—this is difficult to say.

There are a mass of reasons which may not permit it; and moreover which in most cases depend neither upon us personally nor upon great laws, but only upon the various accidental conditions of our arising and formation, of which the chief are heredity and the conditions under which the process of our “preparatory age” flows. It is just these uncontrollable conditions which may not permit this liberation.

The chief difficulty in the way of liberation from whole entire slavery consists in this, that it is necessary, with an intention issuing from one’s own initiative and persistence, and sustained by one’s own efforts, that is to say, not by another’s will but by one’s own, to obtain the eradication from one’s presence both of the already fixed consequences of certain properties of that something in our forefathers called the organ Kundabuffer, as well as of the predisposition to those consequences which might again arise ...

Great Nature, in Her foresight and for many important reasons ... was constrained to place within the common presences of our remote ancestors just such an organ, thank to the engendering properties of which they might be protected from the possibility of seeing and feeling anything as it proceeds in reality. (B:1219–20)

Suggesting that the said “organ” was removed by Nature, but its consequences has continued across generations to the present as a result of human propensity for habituation, Gurdjieff continues to add that the fundamental “reality” which this organ or its consequences help veil from human awareness is the inevitability of one’s own death. He continues:

... suppose they should cognize the inevitability of their speedy death, then from only an experiencing in thought alone would they hang themselves ...

Thanks to these consequences, not only does the cognition of these terrors not arise in the psyche of these people, but also for the purpose of self-quieting they even invent all kinds of fantastic explanations plausible to their naïve logic for what they really sense and also for what they do not sense at all ...

How is it possible to reconcile the fact that a man is terrified at a small timid mouse, the most frightened of all creatures, and of thousands of other similar trifles which might never even occur, and yet experience no terror before the inevitability of his own death? ...

If the average contemporary man were given the possibility to sense or to remember, if only in his thought, that at a definite known date, for instance, tomorrow, a week, or a month, or even a year or two hence, he would die and die for certain, what would then remain, one asks, of all that had until then filled up and constituted his life?

Everything would lose its sense and significance for him ...

In short, to look his own death, as is said, “in the face” the average man cannot and must not—he would then, so to say, “get out of his depth” and before him, in clearcut form, the question would arise: “Why then should we live and toil and suffer?”

Precisely that such a question may not arise, Great Nature, having become convinced that in the common presences of most people there have already ceased to be any factors for meritorious manifestations proper to three-centered beings, had providentially wisely protected them by allowing the arising in them of various consequences of those nonmeritorious properties unbecoming to three-centered beings which, in the absence of a proper actualization, conduce to their not perceiving or sensing reality ...

Whereupon it follows that life in general is given to people not for themselves, but that this life is necessary for the said Higher Cosmic Purposes, in consequences of which Great Nature watches over this life so that it may flow in a more or less tolerable form, and takes care that it should not prematurely cease.

Do not we, people, ourselves also feed, watch over, look after, and make the lives of our sheep and pigs as comfortable as possible?

Do we do all this because we value their lives for the sake of their lives?

No! We do all this in order to slaughter them one fine day and to obtain the meat we require, with as much fat as possible.

In the same way Nature takes all measures to ensure that we shall live without seeing the terror, and that we should not hang ourselves, but live long; and then, when we are required, She slaughters us ...

There is in our life a certain very great purpose and we must all serve this Great Common Purpose—in this lies the whole sense and predestination of our life. (B:1222–27)

The key to the link between the question of the purpose of life and death on the one hand, and the problem of the subconscious mind on the other, is the notion of the “organ Kundabuffer” introduced by Gurdjieff into the texture of his teaching. This “buffer” is one that obstructs the blending of the physical unconscious (instinctive), the emotional subconscious, and the mental consciousness in the individual, impeding him from proper understanding and control over her or his own organism. This buffer acts to prevent the premature realization of the “terror of the situation” of one’s

purpose in organic life. It is this buffer that lies at the bottom of the hypnotic sleep of our everyday lives, brought on by nature so as to prevent the human organism's awakening to the realization of the inevitability of her or his death. However, it is also the transcendence of this buffer and its consequences—which fragment the inner life of the “individual” into separately functioning three centers²—that is at the heart of the purpose of Gurdjieff's teaching and explains why he was so interested in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills for the practice of hypnotism.

The passages quoted above are from the closing pages of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, the first of Gurdjieff's three series commonly titled *All and Everything*, all of which follow an oft-repeated presentation of the problem of the threefold fragmentation of human “individual's” life and consciousness (B:1189–1219). There, via the analogy of carriage, horse, coachman and passenger representing the human being's physical, emotional, and mental centers and real “I” respectively, Gurdjieff states:

A man as a whole with all his separately concentrated and functioning localizations, that is to say, his formed and independently educated “personalities,” is almost exactly comparable to that organization for conveying a passenger, which consists of a carriage, a horse, and a coachman.

It must first of all be remarked that the difference between a real man and a pseudoman, that is between one who has his own “I” and one who has not, is indicated in the analogy we have taken by the passenger sitting in the carriage. In the first case, that of the real man, the passenger is the owner of the carriage; and in the second case, he is simply the first chance passer-by who, like the fare in a “hackney carriage,” is continuously being changed.

The body of a man with all its motor reflex manifestations corresponds simply to the carriage itself; all the functionings and manifestations of feeling of a man correspond to the horse harnessed to the carriage and drawing it; the coachman sitting on the box and directing the horse corresponds to that in a man which people call consciousness or mentation; and finally, the passenger seated in the carriage and commanding the coachman is that which is called “I.”

2. I distinguish between the “unconscious” and the “subconscious,” using them for the physical and emotional centers respectively. Gurdjieff himself also generally associates the “unconscious” with the planetary body throughout his writings. See for instance the passage in the First Series (B:1171) where Gurdjieff advises his grandson to be aware of the “unconscious part of a being,” and to “be just towards this dependent and unconscious part and not require of it more than it is able to give.”

Properly speaking, though, each center has its own unconscious, subconscious, and conscious aspects. Gurdjieff's exercises were often designed so as to help the pupil see not only the three centers as a whole, but how the whole was also represented in minuscule as aspects of each part. Thus we have the physical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of the physical center, the same of the emotional center, and the same of the intellectual center. Likewise, the association of the three unconscious (instinctive), subconscious, and conscious centers must also be seen as being present within each center as well.

The fundamental evil among contemporary people is chiefly that, owing to the rooted and widespread abnormal methods of education of the rising generation, this fourth personality which should be present in everybody on reaching responsible age is entirely missing in them; and almost all of them consist only of the three enumerated parts, which parts, moreover, are formed arbitrarily of themselves and anyhow. In other words, almost every contemporary man of responsible age consists of nothing more nor less than simply a “hackney carriage,” and one moreover, composed as follows: a broken-down carriage “which has long ago seen its day,” a crock of a horse, and, on the box, a tatterdemalion, half-sleepy, half-drunken coachman whose time designated by Mother Nature for self-perfection passes while he waits on a corner, fantastically daydreaming, for any old chance passenger. The first passenger who happens along hires him and dismisses him just as he pleases, and not only him but also all the parts subordinate to him. (B:1192–93)

And it is to this theme that Gurdjieff returns after his discussion of the purpose of human life and the functions of the “organ Kundabuffer,” as he continues to elaborate how by becoming aware and intentionally working on harmonizing and blending the functionings of one’s three centers in order to develop one’s own real “I,” the human individual can choose the path of the river that flows to the ocean of immortality rather than the branch that succumbs to the netherlands of nothingness below:

Although the real man who has already acquired his own “I” and also the man in quotation marks who has not, are equally slaves of the said “Greatness,” yet the difference between them, as I have already said, consists in this, that since the attitude of the former to his slavery is conscious, he acquires the possibility, simultaneously with serving the all-universal Actualizing, of applying a part of his manifestations according to the providence of Great Nature for the purpose of acquiring for himself “imperishable Being”; whereas the latter, not cognizing his slavery, serves during the flow of the entire process of his existence exclusively only as a thing, which when no longer needed, disappears forever. (B:1227)

Gurdjieff insists that knowledge of the human subconscious mind and techniques of hypnotic healing to eradicate the consequences of the so-called “organ Kundabuffer” were “absolute” requirements for transcending the enslaving mechanism of life and death in order to achieve immortality by means of acquiring one’s own “I” and imperishable Soul. When referring to the legacy of Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815), for instance, Gurdjieff writes elsewhere in the First Series through the words of “Beelzebub”:

“And in doing this, they criticize exactly that humble and honest learned being of their planet, who, if he had not been pecked to death would have revived that science, which alone is absolutely necessary to them and by means of which alone, perhaps, they might be saved from the consequences of the properties of the organ Kundabuffer.” (B:562)

Gurdjieff's First Series ends in fact with the following declaration by the elderly Beelzebub to his grandson, Hassein, on his spaceship Karnak:

“The sole means now for the saving of the beings of the planet Earth would be to implant again into their presences a new organ, an organ like Kundabuffer, but this time of such properties that every one of these unfortunates during the process of existence should constantly sense and be cognizant of the inevitability of his own death as well as of the death of everyone upon whom his eyes or attention rests.

“Only such a sensation and such a cognizance can now destroy the egoism completely crystallized in them that has swallowed up the whole of their Essence and also that tendency to hate others which flows from it—the tendency, namely, which engenders all those mutual relationships existing there, which serve as the chief cause of all their abnormalities unbecoming to three-brained beings and maleficent for them themselves and for the whole of the Universe.” (B:1183)

Gurdjieff utters these last words of his First Series through the character of Beelzebub who, having earned a “pardon” from God for the sins of his youth, is on his way to eventually unite with His Endlessness via a transitional stay in the planet Purgatory to deal with certain remorses of conscience.

Gurdjieff's narrative of his life's story as found in his own writings illustrate the basic thrust and substance of his teaching as outlined above. The brief account that follows is a summary of a more detailed account to be presented in Chapter Five, itself derived from a further, textually referenced chronology of his life included in the Appendix.

What linked together all the three major periods of Gurdjieff's life was his preoccupation with the meanings of human life and death.

During the *preparatory period* (1872?–1888), Gurdjieff was experientially exposed to this problem as a result, on the one hand, of the death of his grandmother and older sister, and on the other of incidents such as the apparent resurrection of a Tartar man from death (and his swift and unjust murder by superstitious villagers) and particularly Gurdjieff's near-death experience as a result of his jealous duel, over a sweetheart, with a classmate on an artillery range. It was the unconvincing answers provided by his elders and “scientific” books to the question of meanings of life and death and to other inexplicable incidents (such as witnessing a boy caught in a Yezidi circle, confronting an inexplicable fortune-telling experience, participating in table-turning experiments, etc.) that made the young Gurdjieff thirstier than ever to find an answer. What was unique in Gurdjieff's personality, however, was a deep-rooted and obsessive inclination to do things differently than others—thanks perhaps to his grandmother's advice on her deathbed either to follow others in life, or not do anything as others do.

Consequently, Gurdjieff's search for an answer to the problem of life and death did not take an ordinary direction in his adult life.

Gurdjieff's life during 1888–1912 was a long *period of search*. It is during the initial transition phase (1888–1892) of this period that Gurdjieff clearly formulated the cardinal question of his life: What is the sense and purpose of life (and death) in general and of human life in particular on Earth? The significance of this initial phase also lies in the fact that by 1892 Gurdjieff became convinced that neither contemporary science nor established religions could provide him with an answer. By 1902, Gurdjieff succeeded in finding, at least theoretically, the basic clue to answering his question. Having become convinced that a deep knowledge of human subconscious mind and of hypnotism in particular is a key to unraveling the mystery of life and death on Earth, he retreated to seclusion for two years, and further developed the basic contours of his "system." Having established the theoretical foundations of his teachings, he then dedicated the following ten years of the search period (1902–1912) to the practical verification of and experimentation with his theoretical findings.

Gurdjieff's *teaching period* during the rest of his life (1912–1949), then, can be comprehended in light of his continuing need not only to experimentally verify and perfect his knowledge of human subconscious mind and hypnotism, but also to use this knowledge to answer his cardinal question regarding the sense and purpose of human life and death on Earth. For practical reasons having to do with external historical events and personal "accidents," Gurdjieff turned from teaching via his Institute (1912–1925) to teaching via writing (1925–1935). The final phase of Gurdjieff's teaching (1935–1949) combined both teaching channels of organizing his pupils and private readings from his writings.

As we shall see throughout subsequent chapters, Gurdjieff's style of teaching via scattering of information across multiple passages, texts, talks, speeches, or even events in everyday life is inseparable from the substantive content of his teaching. "Fragmentation" of life and the effort to overcome it is of paradigmatic significance for Gurdjieff who himself sought to invent his own teaching by painstakingly traveling, collecting, and assimilating, like a bee, the most useful fragments of wisdom from diverse mystical schools. This makes it often difficult, however, to identify which aspects or "fragments" in Gurdjieff's teaching originated from other sources and which were his own unique contribution to mysticism.

Besides, Gurdjieff intentionally avoided most writing conventions, often adopted a humorous and satirical tone, and conveyed his ideas indirectly through the voices of his literary characters—wrapped in all kinds of mythological and fictitious stories and linguistic novelties. One has to be closely familiar with Middle Eastern folk cultures and languages to appreciate the real meaning of some of Gurdjieff's writings. Except for one writing, *The*

Herald of Coming Good, which Gurdjieff withdrew from circulation soon after publication in 1933, none of his writings were formally published during his lifetime, even though Gurdjieff did approve the galley proofs of the First Series shortly before his death. During his lifetime, his writings were mainly used in his reading sessions and often read only by his close pupils.

It was only after his death in 1949 that Gurdjieff's writings were gradually published by his pupils, and it is thanks to their labors that readers have the chance of knowing more directly about Gurdjieff's legacy.

Why the Hermeneutic Method?

Don't judge a man by the tales of others.
—Gurdjieff 1984:274

Studies of Gurdjieff's life and teaching face several interrelated methodological challenges which have been, at least in part, responsible for stirring considerable controversy among Gurdjieff's pupils and scholars. In what follows, I will address several major issues in regard to the study of Gurdjieff's life and teaching which in my view point to adopting the hermeneutic method as the most suitable approach to the study of Gurdjieff's writings and legacy. I will elaborate on each of these in turn.

Gurdjieff's Secretive Attitude

There can be no doubt that Gurdjieff intended to spread his ideas to and through his pupils; he in fact reports (as noted in his *The Herald of Coming Good*, published in 1933 and soon withdrawn from circulation by him) to have expected one of his earliest senior pupils, i.e., P. D. Ouspensky, to play a major part in spreading his "ideas also by means of literature" (H:41). It was apparently Gurdjieff's perception of Ouspensky's reluctance to keep this promise that in part led Gurdjieff to decide to commence his own writing career following his near-fatal auto accident in 1924.³

However, it is possible that some information about Gurdjieff's life experiences and ideas did not find their way to his pupils orally due to the secretive attitude Gurdjieff maintained in his teaching. Information about the exact location and whereabouts of various orders and "certain Dervish monastery" (H:19) Gurdjieff allegedly visited, such as that of the "Sarmoung Brotherhood," was never revealed though claims were made that they actually existed and had been visited. Likewise, Gurdjieff's promise in his Second Series to elaborate further, in his Third Series, about his meetings and conversations with three elders he had met during his

3. Gurdjieff was not aware of the existence of Ouspensky's manuscript (*In Search of the Miraculous*) until after the latter's death on October 2, 1947. At that time, Ouspensky's wife revealed the manuscript to Gurdjieff, seeking his approval for its publication and inviting Ouspensky's pupils to rejoin the master's circle after more than two decades of alienation between Gurdjieff and his senior pupil.

travels were never fulfilled. The twenty-four-year “search period” of Gurdjieff’s life (1888–1912) still remains largely unaccounted for despite wild conjectures on the part of one of his major biographers (Webb 1980)—even though some of his preoccupations during that period did find expression in his *The Herald of Coming Good* (1933). Yet, this important booklet was withdrawn following the expression at times of severe dissatisfactions on the part of his pupils following its publication.⁴ Gurdjieff’s Third Series remains incomplete, with some passages actually cut off in mid-sentence or paragraph. Even Gurdjieff’s birth date is still a subject of controversy (Taylor 2008:14–18) and this alone is a highly symbolic indicator that Gurdjieff did not intend to reveal everything and every fact about his life in a clear and definitive way to his pupils.

Gurdjieff was particularly clear about the extent of efforts he continued to make to bury ever deeper the most important of his ideas beneath the symbolic surface of his text. When a pupil once reportedly corrected him for having meant to say that he buried the “bone” and not the “dog” in *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, Gurdjieff’s response was emphatic: “No, ... I bury whole dog” (Wolfe, 1974, quoted in Grossman 2003). Therefore, while the secondary sources of oral and/or written information about Gurdjieff as conveyed through those coming into direct contact with him are important, the extent to which Gurdjieff actually revealed important elements of his ideas and teaching to his pupils was not boundless. This adds significant weight to the need for exploring Gurdjieff’s ideas by means of a close study of his own writings.

Publication Chronology of Gurdjieff’s Writings

Gurdjieff’s writings, intended in three “series,” were never published during his lifetime, although he inspected and approved the galley proofs of his First Series, *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, shortly before his death in 1949. The First Series was first formally published in English in 1950 after his passing, the Second Series in English in 1963, and the Third Series privately printed in English in 1975 followed by a second edition a year later (including ten more pages from the 1976 French edition) (Driscoll 2004a:16). The only piece of Gurdjieff’s writings, published by himself in 1933, was the *The Herald of Coming Good* (including passages from an earlier text of the program of his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man). However, as noted above, this booklet stirred such a controversy among his pupils that Gurdjieff soon “withdrew” it from circulation, advising his pupils not to read it. *A Scenario of the Ballet: The*

4. James Moore writes in his *Gurdjieff: Anatomy of a Myth* about how a hundred copies of *Herald*, sent to Ouspensky, were “burnt (hypothesizing that the author had contracted syphilis and gone mad)” (1991:249).

Struggle of the Magicians attributed to Gurdjieff was also published in a limited edition of ten copies in 1957 (Driscoll 2004a:17).

One of Gurdjieff's common practices of transmission of his teaching during the last decades of his life was that of oral reading of parts of his writings during arranged sessions. Parts of his writings were read during various gatherings in the presence of Gurdjieff, who then used his audience's reactions to further revise his texts, reportedly to further bury his ideas.

The significance of such a prolonged, delayed, and fragmented publication chronology for the study of Gurdjieff's life and ideas cannot be underestimated. The knowledge about Gurdjieff as transmitted via P. D. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* (1949)—a work that shaped much of public information and imagination about Gurdjieff in ensuing decades—were almost entirely limited to what Ouspensky learned from Gurdjieff orally during a few years still early in Gurdjieff's teaching career (mostly pertaining to the 1915–1917 period, only the last 24 pages pertaining to the 1915–1924 period as a whole). None of Gurdjieff's series had been written, let alone published, during that time. Besides, Ouspensky himself does not provide any explicit indication in *In Search of the Miraculous* (1949) that his account of Gurdjieff had been shaped, even tangentially, by readings of any material that were written by Gurdjieff following the 1915–1924 period. Yet, this book was, and still remains, a (if not the) major source of knowledge about Gurdjieff's teaching.

The same should be noted regarding commentaries made on Gurdjieff's life and teaching prior to successive publications of parts of his writings. Of course, several pupils, including A. R. Orage, were closely involved in editing the English translations of both the First and the Second Series, and generally Gurdjieff's inner circle pupils were more or less in touch with Gurdjieff's writing activities. However, the vast majority of his pupils, and the public at large, had not had full access to Gurdjieff's writings in officially published form before their successive publication dates.

While Gurdjieff claimed during his lifetime to have finished the First and the Second Series of his writings, he allegedly left his Third Series unfinished. The long-term gaps between the posthumous publication of various series, the existence of an essay titled "The Material Question" that was later included by the editors at the end of the published Second Series, the dismissal and withdrawal of the *The Herald of Coming Good*, and the allegedly unfinished Third Series did not make it possible for the public and perhaps the wider circle of Gurdjieff's followers to become *simultaneously* informed of all the components of Gurdjieff's writings and/or with equal attention across the fragmented writings. As far as the general public is concerned, the successive publication of his First, Second, and Third Series actually assured that his books would be read by the wider public in the strict order explicitly outlined in the opening page of his First Series.

The secondary literature accumulated over the decades during and following Gurdjieff's lifetime, therefore, were produced more or less with *partial* knowledge of all of Gurdjieff's writings at hand. It is only after 1975 with the publication of the first edition of the Third Series that it became possible for the public, if not Gurdjieff's wider circle of followers, to read all of Gurdjieff's published writings together, and in orders other than that prescribed by Gurdjieff in the opening page of his First Series. Thus, it has become increasingly important and necessary to conduct systematic and integrated study of Gurdjieff's own writings as a whole.

Substantive Accessibility of Gurdjieff's Ideas

Aside from the limited and asynchronous availability, in published form, of Gurdjieff's writings to the wider circle of pupils and public at large during successive phases of his lifetime and beyond, it is even more important to note the complexities of content, form, and style purposefully introduced by Gurdjieff into his writings. In other words, even when all his writings became available, in manuscript or published form, to his more or less initiated pupils and public at large, there was still a significant challenge to be met in deciphering and understanding his texts.

Even the closest of Gurdjieff's pupils have been at odds with one another regarding the basic date of Gurdjieff's birth year, the meaning of some of his invented words in the First Series, or the reality or fictive nature of the brotherhoods he reportedly visited in Central Asia, and so on. Whether this was a result of Gurdjieff's concern for pedagogical correctness is an interesting question to explore. However, it is important to note that Gurdjieff's conscious and intentional efforts at hiding his ideas in the body of his substantive and semi-autobiographical texts have led to the spreading of much speculative and secondary knowledge about his life and ideas, mostly through the writings of his pupils and others, a majority of whom have been one way or another associated with various branches of followers and schools affiliated with Gurdjieff's teaching.

There is little doubt that Gurdjieff intentionally sought to fragment and hide his intended messages across his writings. He reportedly pursued this intention systematically, purposefully, and consistently over the many years, constantly revising his text to bury his ideas deeper. Gurdjieff was intent on, and took pride in, adopting a writing style similar to what he had learned from his father, one that is described in his Second Series as hiding serious ideas under the cloak of apparently trivial, absurd and nonsensical ones (M:38). The reasons for adopting such a pedagogical and writing style aside, consideration of the purposefully constructed "mystical" shell hiding the rational kernel or "gist" of Gurdjieff's teaching is crucial.

This methodological challenge has resulted in two extreme positions in regard to using Gurdjieff's own writings as a resource. On the one hand, the

readily noticeable absurd ideas in the outer shell have been at times taken literally, leading to the attribution of certain ideas, beliefs, and powers to Gurdjieff that he did not have or mean to attribute to himself; on the other hand, the existence of such absurdities scattered throughout the writings has led to the dismissal of important experiential and/or substantive elements of his teaching that shed significant light on Gurdjieff's life and teaching. How to sift through the absurd and the significant, the 'mystical' and the rational, in Gurdjieff's writings, therefore, has posed a continuing challenge for scholars in Gurdjieff Studies, challenges that those on both extremes of the argument as noted above tend to avoid in favor of more readily accessible and popularized versions of Gurdjieff's life and teaching.

Gurdjieff's own admiration for *Kastousilia* (M:38), his father's and first teacher's odd style of conversation (as quoted as part of the epigraphs chosen for this book, on p. vi), is most telling and illustrative of his own preferred literary style. The described style of expressing important truths wrapped in absurd-sounding conversations, such as those (some even readily referred to in the text as "Arch-absurd") that also take place between Beelzebub and his grandson in the First Series, alone provides strong evidence for Gurdjieff's own preferred method and style of literary exposition, and, by implication, for the need to adopt a hermeneutic approach to the study of his text.

The Limitations of Secondary Knowledge about Gurdjieff

There is no doubt that the oral and written traditions and knowledges transmitted by Gurdjieff's pupils shed significant light on his life and ideas. It is certainly possible that Gurdjieff may have intended that at least parts of what he sought to transmit to be passed along via his living legacy. The "unfinished" nature of the Third Series, and the readily acknowledged fact noted therein that some of the techniques (such as those of breathing) used in teaching could not be transmitted in writing and had to be learned via contacts with living followers, all point to the significance of his pupils as important sources of knowledge about Gurdjieff.

However, the methodological challenge posed by the need to sift through the reliable and unreliable in what secondary knowledge has been transmitted is no less formidable. In this regard, a brief excursion into the secondary biographical literature on Gurdjieff may be illuminating.

In an online essay on "Inventors of Gurdjieff" (2004a), Paul Beekman Taylor, a prolific biographer of Gurdjieff, provides a list of works⁵ written on Gurdjieff, briefly exploring the degree to which the secondary studies have "invented" Gurdjieff rather than portraying a realistic picture of his life and ideas. Other than the classic book by P. D. Ouspensky (*In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, 1949) chronicling in detail its author's early talks with Gurdjieff, Taylor cites two other major studies of Gurdjieff's life and ideas that can be readily distinguished from those

preceding them. One was conducted by James Webb, which Taylor notes as “the first systematic biographical account by a writer who hadn’t known Gurdjieff personally” (2004), appearing as *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G. I. Gurdjieff, P. D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (1980, republished in 1987 by Shambhala), and the other, a work by James Moore, titled *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth, A Biography* (1991) which later appeared in a second edition as *Gurdjieff: A Biography* (1999).

There is no doubt that these biographical studies have provided important insights into the life and ideas of Gurdjieff. However, none of these and other studies listed by Taylor have involved a systematic study of Gurdjieff’s writings as a whole.⁶ Besides, Gurdjieff’s preoccupations with hypnotism have continued to receive marginal attention in these works, taking at face value Gurdjieff’s pronouncement that he took a vow at one or

5. Taylor’s list includes the following works published by Gurdjieff’s pupils since the the early 1960s: Margaret Anderson’s *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* (1962); Kathryn Hulme’s *Undiscovered Country* (1966); Fritz Peters’ *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* (1964) and *Gurdjieff Remembered* (1965); C. S. Nott’s *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (1961) and *Journey Through this World* (1969); John G. Bennett’s *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (1973) and *Witness* (1974); Louise Welch’s *Orage with Gurdjieff in America* (1982); Louise March’s *The Gurdjieff Years 1929–1949* (1990); William Patrick Patterson’s *Ladies of the Rope* (1998) and Taylor’s own *Shadows of Heaven: Gurdjieff and Toomer* (1998), *Gurdjieff and Orage* (2001), and *Gurdjieff’s America* (2004) (Taylor, 2004a, <http://www.gurdjieff.org/taylor1.htm>). To Taylor’s selected list one may add a recent introductory book written by John Shirley titled *Gurdjieff: An Introduction to His Life and Ideas* (2004), and Taylor’s own new work *G. I. Gurdjieff: A New Life* (2008); his *Gurdjieff’s America* (2004b) later appeared in a revised version as *Gurdjieff’s Invention of America* (2007b).

For other works on Gurdjieff with some relevance to the present study see C. Daly King’s “The Oragian Version” (1951); Louis Pauwels’ “*Gurdjieff*” ([1964] 1972); Jean Vaysses’s *Toward Awakening: An Approach to the Teaching Left by Gurdjieff* ([1980] 1988); Martha Heyneman’s *The Breathing Cathedral: Feeling Our Way into a Living Cosmos* (1993); Keith Buzzell’s *A Grandchild’s Odyssey: Explorations in Active Mentation: Re-Membering Gurdjieff’s Teaching* (2007); Bob Hunter’s compilation *The True Myth: Beryl Pogonos’s Teaching on G. I. Gurdjieff’s All and Everything* (2002); C. S. Nott’s *A. R. Orage’s Commentaries on Beelzebub’s Tales* (1962); A. G. E. Blake’s (ed.) *J. G. Bennett’s Talks on Beelzebub’s Tales* (1977); and H. E. Stanton’s “Gurdjieff and Ego-Enhancement: A Powerful Alliance” (1997). Maurice Nicoll’s six volume *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky* (1996) is a substantial source of exploratory thinking on and practical engagements with the ideas of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Two major indexes to Gurdjieff’s First Series, one published by the Society for Traditional Studies (1971), and another on all the three series (a two-volume set compiled by Alan F. N. Poole published in 2004 and 2006) are also available.

6. Taylor’s recent *The Philosophy of G. I. Gurdjieff: Time, Word and Being in All and Everything* (2007a) aims to be “the first reading of the three series of Gurdjieff’s All and Everything as an organic whole” (back cover). Aside from the fact that it gives marginal attention to *The Herald of Coming Good*, his study focuses on a subject that differs from one undertaken in the present work in terms of exploring the place of hypnosis in Gurdjieff’s teaching and life. It is noteworthy that the original version of the present study involving a systematic study of all of Gurdjieff’s writings (including *Herald*), with a central focus on the place of hypnosis in his teaching, was deposited (as part of my doctoral dissertation) with University Microfilms International (UMI) in 2002.

another point in his life not to use it for egotistical purposes. Webb's study is an effort to put Gurdjieff in historical context, by seeking to correlate Gurdjieff's autobiographical accounts with certain, at times obscure and readily dismissable, pictorial facts and historical events. Noteworthy among these is his unconvincing association of Gurdjieff with a certain Ushé Narzunoff, who had travelled to Tibet around the same time. Webb even produces photos of Narzunoff whose lack of resemblance to Gurdjieff would be readily noticeable to any novice observer. Acknowledging Moore's dismissal of Webb's Gurdjieff-Narzunoff association theory, and his own refutation of both Webb's and Moore's theory of another association between Gurdjieff and a certain Prince Ozay, Taylor continues to problematize Moore's biographical account of Gurdjieff:

... Unfortunately, the number of lacunae, contradictions and speculations that mark the greater part of these accounts confuse more than inform. Though James Moore cautiously called Gurdjieff's own account of his early life, 1866(?)–1912, “auto-mythology,” he and other writers on Gurdjieff's life seem to have mythologized the whole of his life. “Mythologized” is, perhaps, an inadequate term. In fact, much written on Gurdjieff's life after 1912 is pure invention, in some instances speculation paraded as fact. The unwary reader who would trust accounts is led into perpetuating error, and the catena of error from the 1960s to the present is almost impossible to detach from a putative “canonical” historical view. (2004a, <http://www.gurdjieff.org/taylor1.htm>)

Taylor then provides more specific examples of the inconsistencies in the secondary knowledges amassed about Gurdjieff's life and teaching, leading him to advocate instead a hermeneutic methodological approach to Gurdjieff Studies that may bear more fruit.

Organizational Independence from Gurdjieffian Circles

Undoubtedly, without significant efforts on the part of Gurdjieff's pupils, little of the existing knowledge about Gurdjieff's life and teaching, including his writings, would have survived. It is also important to note that Gurdjieff's teaching is only partially embodied in his writings.⁷ Gurdjieff's legacy goes far beyond intellectual knowledge, and includes significant emotionally- and physically-laden experiential material that can only be transmitted and grasped via practical learning.⁸ In this regard, the

7. J. Walter Driscoll has reminded me that Gurdjieff himself insisted in his First Series that his writings should be considered the fundamental public conduit of his teaching. After all, as Gurdjieff insisted, “all and everything” that he intended to transmit to his posterity is in his writings.

8. In my study of Gurdjieff's writings, I have sought to augment the intellectual dimension with the practice of meditation—broadly speaking, not just sitting—techniques drawn from other traditions that complement, though do not certainly substitute for, the learning of the experiential dimensions of Gurdjieff's teaching.

limitations of any study, including the present one, that takes Gurdjieff's written legacy into account in the absence of equal attention to the emotional and physical dimensions of his teaching should be readily acknowledged.

However, one also needs to acknowledge the extent to which organizational affiliation with one or another group associated with Gurdjieff can raise legitimate methodological concerns regarding the subconscious biases that may influence the interpretive and evaluative dimensions of Gurdjieff Studies. It is important to note, for instance, that among the biographers of Gurdjieff listed by Taylor (2004a), only James Webb (1946–1980) claimed to have been independent and outside the circle of Gurdjieff's followers. In the Preface to his work *The Harmonious Circle*, dated November 1978, James Webb wrote:

Part of the difficulty is that there has never been a book written about Gurdjieff and his followers by someone not personally involved in their activities; and the grinding of axes among the Master's successors has resulted in much of what has been written being—either deliberately or unconsciously—distorted.... There are peculiar difficulties in the way of the would-be independent critic of Gurdjieff. (11, 12)

One may still plausibly claim that to this day the most substantial studies of Gurdjieff's life and ideas have been undertaken by those who have been at one time or another more or less associated organizationally with the main or side branches of Gurdjieff's followers. In this light, it may be plausible to consider the likelihood of biases entering the perspectives of those organizationally and/or intellectually associated with Gurdjieff's teaching.

It is important to note here that the notion and practice of scientific objectivity in scholarship have been widely problematized in the academic discourse during the past decades, especially in the sociology of knowledge and of the social sciences, and more so in the humanities. No matter how one is attached to or detached from one or another organization, one's particular ideas and biases most likely enter various phases of the research process. For many scholars, the question posed today is not whether one is biased in research, but whether one is aware of one's biases. In his work *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (1936), Karl Mannheim significantly contributed to the clarification of the distinction between ideological analysis on the one hand and of the sociology of knowledge on the other, noting that the former transitions to the latter when ideological and/or political adversaries begin to realize in the course of debate that not only the ideas held by their adversaries but also those of their own are socially grounded and therefore biased. It is the reflective acknowledgment of one's own biases that is of significance here as a hallmark of a sociology of knowledge that has moved beyond simplistic

debunking of others' writings and viewpoints. At the same time, it may be equally plausible to argue that the more one is structurally grounded in an organizational context or intellectually vested in and identified with a particular intellectual tradition, the more subconscious biases may enter her or his research on subjects pertaining to that organization or tradition. To a certain extent, maintenance of independence from movements may provide flexible grounds for advancing independent and critical perspectives on questions and issues raised in regard to the ideas inspiring them.⁹

One may also pose a contrasting methodological argument here, suggesting that maintaining a "participant (or even participating) observant's" position (Jacobs 2006:xiv) may yield fruitful insights about an

9. There have been new efforts in independent academic studies of Gurdjieff's teaching since Webb published his book in 1980. Anna Terri Challenger's *An Introduction to Gurdjieff's 'Beelzebub': A Modern Sufi Teaching Tale* (1990), later revised and published as *Philosophy and Art in Gurdjieff's Beelzebub: A Modern Sufi Odyssey* (2002), was the first to grapple directly with *Beelzebub's Tales*. As Driscoll has noted, "Challenger's concise analysis and thoughtful interpretation of some of *Beelzebub's* stories, convincingly render her thesis that these tales comprise an extended psycho-spiritual parable presenting Gurdjieff's cosmological vision" (2004b). And more recently, David J. Pecotic's doctoral dissertation, "Body and Correspondence in G. I. Gurdjieff's '*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*': A Case Study in the Construction of Categories in the Study of Esotericism" (University of Sydney, 2004) breaks new ground in independent studies of Gurdjieff in the context of current academic debates on mysticism, religion, and esotericism. Critically comparing "Antoine Faivre's characterization of correspondence as one of essential characteristics of western esotericism and Wouter Hanegraff's extension of these characteristics into modernity" with Gurdjieff's notion of macrocosm and microcosm in the First Series, Pecotic argues that "... Gurdjieff has been misinterpreted or ignored by scholars of religion because of the uncompromising nature of his spiritual materialism and concomitant emphasis on embodiment" and explores "the methodological reasons behind this" (from the Abstract). I appreciate J. Walter Driscoll for bringing Pecotic's work to my attention. For other recent doctoral studies on Gurdjieff or related to his teaching, see Jervis (2007), Pittman (2005), and Whitten (2004). For other published independent studies on Gurdjieff not previously or elsewhere mentioned, see Garrett Thomson's *On Gurdjieff* (2003) and Whittall N. Perry's *Gurdjieff in the Light of Tradition* (2002). Basarab Nicolescu, noted theoretical physicist and author of *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity* (2002), has advanced important insight into Gurdjieff's "cosmological mythos" in light of leading theories in modern quantum physics and cosmology (cf. his "Gurdjieff's Philosophy of Nature" [1997] 2003).

Over the past several decades, J. Walter Driscoll has patiently and carefully chronicled, with detailed annotations, much of the important literature published on or related to Gurdjieff in the English language. Most recently, see his "Bibliography" (2007b) in (with James Moore) "P. D. Ouspensky: An Appreciation and Bibliography." For earlier efforts see his (with the Gurdjieff Foundation of California) *Gurdjieff: An Annotated Bibliography, with an Introductory Essay by Michel De Salzmann* (1985) and *Gurdjieff: A Reading Guide* (2004). For a condensation of two essays featured in the latter, see his "The Gurdjieff Literature" (2007a) in B. A. Russell's (compiler) *Gurdjieff's Eight Key Evocations*; also see his *The Essence of Orage. Some Aphorisms and Observations* (1997), his (with George Baker) "Gurdjieff in America: An Overview" (1995), and his "Bibliography" compiled in Speeth and Friedlander's *Gurdjieff: Seeker of the Truth* (1980).

organization or movement—ones that may not be available to an outsider. This is a valid argument, to be sure. However, the question of appropriate method also depends on the particular nature of studies undertaken and research goals set therein, as well as an interrogation of what “participation” means. A hermeneutic study of Gurdjieff’s writings provides significant intellectual opportunities for conceptual “participant observation” of the intricacies of Gurdjieff’s thought—an opportunity that may not be available for an “outsider” to such an indepth study using primary sources, no matter how many years one has been a member of one or another Gurdjieffian circle. The complexity of who participates or not in the subject matter of study goes much beyond simple organizational membership. The borders of who is “in” or “outside” a system of thought or an organization are significantly influenced by the nature and dynamics of research design itself and the depth of symbolic and organizational interactions exercised therein, within and without, rather than merely through organizational membership or lack thereof.

For the above reasons, entry into Gurdjieff’s life and teaching through independent hermeneutic study of his own writings is a firm step toward more critical appreciation of both the primary and secondary literature of his legacy.

Gurdjieff’s Instructions Regarding the Significance of His Writings

What makes an entry via Gurdjieff’s writings as a methodological pathway to his ideas both feasible and defensible, above all, is Gurdjieff’s own claimed intention and plans for his posterity. Gurdjieff gave ample evidence in his writings that he intended to use them as a conduit to transmit important fragments of information about his life and ideas, ones that he may not have intended to transmit orally to his immediate pupils.

While it may be unrealistic to expect that everything Gurdjieff did or thought would find expression in his writings, it would be plausible to consider that the “gist” of what he intended to pass on to his posterity is presently deposited in the three series of his writings commonly titled *All and Everything*, as well as his previously issued (and withdrawn) *The Herald of Coming Good*. Having survived a severe auto “accident” in 1924, faced with Ouspensky’s perceived failure to keep his promise of writing about his teacher’s ideas, and realizing that none of his pupils had been sufficiently trained to transmit his teaching to future generations of his followers,¹⁰ Gurdjieff himself acknowledged his decision to commit himself to a rigorous plan of writing to transmit the essence of “all and everything” he had experienced and discovered during his searches for truth.

10. Gurdjieff is reported to have said on his deathbed, “I have left you all in a fine mess!” (Speeth 1989:xi).

Gurdjieff's Status as a Teacher of Self-Knowledge

Gurdjieff is considered to have been, and certainly presented himself as, a teacher of methods, body of ideas, and series of practices for attaining self-knowledge and self-transformation. It is thus only fair methodologically to take his claims at what they are worth, and devote significant and serious attention to what Gurdjieff writes about his own life and teaching. Gurdjieff, a storyteller modeled after his Ashokh father, asks his readers, at the very outset of his writings, to read his writings thrice in order to discover, at a level of understanding available to the reader, the “gist” of his writings, and of what he intended to transmit to his posterity. It would be rather odd, on the one hand, to regard Gurdjieff as a master in the art and science of attaining personal self-knowledge and transformation, and, on the other hand, disregard his direct and explicit instructions to his readers to understand his intended knowledge about his life and ideas through a rigorous and systematic study of his own writings. Of course, in this and all matters of exploration healthy skepticism is always advised.

On the Hermeneutic Method

Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek verb hermeneuein, which means to say or interpret; the noun hermeneia, which is the utterance or explication of thought; and the name hermeneus, which refers to the playful, mischievous, “trickster” Hermes (Caputo, 1987; Grondin, 1994). In bringing the messages of the gods to humans,

Hermes entices interpretation. Hermes has the character of complication, multiplicity, lies, jokes, irreverence, indirection, and disdain for rules; however, he is the master of creativity and invention. He has the capacity to see things anew and his power is change, prediction, and the solving of puzzles.

—Moules 2002:3

Nancy Moules’s definition and characterization above of hermeneutics as a qualitative method could not be more apt and revealing as far as the hermeneutics of writing and reading of Gurdjieff’s texts are concerned. In many ways, what Gurdjieff describes *Kastousilia* (M:38; see the epigraphs to the present book, p. vi) to be as the style of conversation he learned from his Pontic Greek father and priest teacher is a hermeneutic method of exposition that he applied and mastered in his major writings. Hermeneutics, in the guise of *Kastousilia*, was used by Gurdjieff to hide ever deeper the bones of the dog he encouraged his pupils and readers to find in his writings (Wolfe 1974)—and so needs to be, it seems, the most suitable method of studying those texts.

The hermeneutic method is akin to contemporary research approaches in phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology (Shutz 1962; Garfinkel 1967), whereby actors’ thoughts and behavior are interpreted from the standpoint of the subjective meanings the actors themselves

attribute and bring to their actions. The meaning of textual practices, especially when they are purposefully constructed as highly coded depositories of ideas, can more effectively be grasped in the context of the literary “definitions of the situation” (Goffman 1959) in which they are used on the one hand, and in relation to the totality of interpretive universes constructed to contain them, on the other. In the case of Gurdjieff, the adoption of a hermeneutic method acquires even more significance, for he left no doubt in his writings and for his posterity that much of the substantive core of his teaching was intentionally embedded in the “tales” and mythologies constructed in his writings. Following the oratory style of his father, Gurdjieff devoted significant attention, *and* pleasure, to hiding much of his ideas in the purposely fragmented corpus of his writings.

There are several aspects of the hermeneutic method that are particularly relevant to this study of Gurdjieff’s writings. I will briefly highlight these, drawing on instances of conversations going on in the field.

The first is in regard to the question of what is said (or not) where and when in a textual landscape. In her study and overview of legacies of hermeneutics, Moules (2002:5) draws on Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989) and Jean Grondin’s interpretations of the latter (1995) to highlight the extent to which what is said and unsaid can be equally important and meaningful in a textual landscape. As Robert Ulin (2005) has similarly pointed out, Jacques Derrida (1974) also distinguished between reading the logos of the text itself and reading its “margins,” considering not only what is included but also what is excluded and left out as being equally significant in the hermeneutic study. This inclusion and exclusion of data, when Gurdjieff’s text is concerned, is very important in a rather different way, since in his case, it is not a question merely of *what* is included and what not, but a question of *where* and *when* one or another data, thought, and idea is inserted inside a text. It is not that the data is necessarily omitted, but that it is omitted from *this* place and yet is then inserted in *that* place. Gurdjieff adopts this hermeneutic strategy masterfully and intentionally, for the architectonics of his writing is in many ways quite self-consciously spatiotemporal, i.e., where and when he adds a meaning and where and when he omits another are purposeful and have significant implications for the interpretations he seeks to “objectively” engender in his readers.

Along the same lines, one may also regard what is included in the “preliminary” pages and “front (or end) matter” of a text to be equally important in undertaking the hermeneutic writing and reading of a text, compared to what appears in the body of the text. And this is noteworthy especially in regard to the relation of the text to the lives of its readers (both the one who studies it hermeneutically, and those who read the results of the latter, as in the case, for instance, of the reader who is reading these lines). Reading the present book without having read the Prologue, for instance,

where certain information is provided about the background of the study and the personal (as well as academic and social) reasons for the study by the author in terms of his own 'attraction' to Gurdjieff's teaching may provide a different interpretation of why and how the present study was conducted. Likewise, reading Gurdjieff's First Series "first" prior to reading the more autobiographical Second Series is bound to have a differential impact on the reader's interpretation of Gurdjieff's purpose in writing them.

This brings me to the second point regarding the hermeneutic method as applied to the present study, namely, the relation of the text to the lives of its readers (and, by implication, of its author as well). In her study "Mystical Experience: Unveiling the Veiled," Katherine Godby, drawing on D. Capps (1984) to represent the hermeneutic method of Paul Ricoeur, writes:

... in Ricoeur's hermeneutics, texts have immense power to disclose whole new worlds, and the worlds they make known have the power to transcend the immediate situation of the text itself and of the reader. Indeed, the relationship between the text and the reader is a reciprocal one. Readers interpret the text, but texts also interpret readers by confronting them with new possibilities, new concepts, new ways-of-being in the world, etc., which the reader may then appropriate or not. If the new world *is* appropriated, the reader is then empowered to transcend her or his immediate situation ... (Godby 2002:239)

I can see that Gurdjieff, the author, may have experienced exactly the same qualities that Godby describes, and, as one of his readers, I have also experienced the same. Similarly, but from another vantage point, and significantly as far as one of the aims of this author in advancing this study is concerned, Rene Geanellos (2000:114) has drawn our attention to Ricoeur's view that "every hermeneutics is thus, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others" (Ricoeur 1974:17). The multiplicity of meanings woven in Gurdjieff's texts not only contributed to his own self-understanding and self-clarifications about the purpose and meaning of his own life and death on Earth, but this study of his work has also been significant in my own efforts to understand the same and myself, critically reflecting, in particular, on the roots of my "attraction" to Gurdjieff's teaching. At a different level, some readers of the present work may experience further degrees of self-understanding depending on how they engage with the hermeneutics of my study of Gurdjieff itself. From one vantage point, this is a study of Gurdjieff's life and teaching. From another, it is a glimpse by others of my own life and learning, an effort to understand and perhaps change myself.

Here, another aspect of the hermeneutic method is worth noting, and that is the notion of the "hermeneutic circle" and how one should go about understanding a text. According to Moules, "[Friedrich] Schleiermacher did

... leave an important legacy of three themes in hermeneutics: the place of creativity in interpretation, the role of language in understanding, and the movement between part and whole in the process of interpretation which later became known as the hermeneutic circle” (Moules 2002:9). Drawing on Gadamer (1989) she further adds,

[Hermeneutics] involves careful and detailed reading and rereading of all the text, allowing for the bringing forth of general impressions, something that catches the regard of the reader and lingers, perturbing and distinctive resonances, familiarities, differences, newness, and echoes. Each re-reading of the text is an attempt to listen for echoes of something that might expand possibilities of understanding ... (29)

The hermeneutic circle is the generative recursion between the whole and the part. Being in the circle is disciplined yet creative, rigorous yet expansive. There is an inherent process of immersion in, and dynamic and evolving interaction with, the data as a whole and the data in part, through extensive readings, re-readings, reflection, and writing. In this process there is a focus on recognizing the particular, isolating understandings, dialoguing with others about interpretation, making explicit the implicit, and, eventually finding language to describe language. (30–31)

Geanellos (2000) also has noted that, “... interpretive understanding goes forward in stages with continual movement between the parts and the whole (the hermeneutic circle), allowing understanding to be enlarged and deepened” (114). Further, “... reaching a deeper level of understanding necessitate[s] selection and interpretation of those parts of the text seen as significant, after which the relationship of those parts to each other, and to the text as a whole, [is] noted” (115). Geanellos continues,

[i]n the final analysis, readers will decide whether to accept, modify or reject an interpreter’s construction. Often, this decision depends on how effectively an interpretive account provides understanding for *that* reader, at *that* time; understanding can change and develop. There is no absolute, unchanging knowledge. (Geanellos 2000:116; italics added)

Finally, we need to consider the issue of validity and “truthfulness” in hermeneutic study. In Moules’s words, “In the end, hermeneutics brings things back home, domesticating the exotic, making what was once exotic to be recognizable and ‘true’” (6). While Moules acknowledges that in the literature, Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology (which inspired much of the sociological phenomenological tradition) has been distinguished and distanced from hermeneutics in that his approach assumes an objective facticity to the literal or everyday texts beyond their hermeneutic interpretations, I think it is important to note that the two aspects of scientific and hermeneutic interpretations of a text, whether literary or in

the life-world, do not have to be mutually exclusive and dualized. In his “Bridging the Gap Between Understanding and Explanation Approaches to the Study of Religion,” and drawing on Paul Ricoeur (cf. 1971, 1976, and in particular, 1978) for instance, Steven D. Kepnes (1986) has argued that,

What Ricoeur offers this methodological debate are two alternative terms to organize the methods used in religious studies and a dialectical hermeneutic to interrelate them. The two terms are taken from Dilthey: *verstehen* (understanding) and *erklären* (explanation). With Ricoeur we need not see the study of religion as either a scientific attempt to explain religion in terms of sociology, psychology or physics, or an intuitive and analogical attempt to grasp the meaning of religion from the believer’s standpoint. The study of religion involves us in an act of interpretation which *necessarily* requires *both* methods of understanding and explanation. (1986:504–5)

In regard to *verstehen*, and its affinity with the hermeneutic method, Kepnes (1986:505–506) further draws upon the views of the sociologist Peter Berger, according to whom, “the human world is essentially a network of meanings and, therefore, nothing in this world can be adequately understood without understanding these meanings ‘from within’” (Berger 1974:126). Kepnes further finds Alfred Schutz’s notion of “multiple realities” especially helpful in his advocacy of a non-dualistic, scientific/hermeneutic, approach to the study of religion (1986:506).

I think the validity of data and the validity of interpretation in the hermeneutic study need to be distinguished from one another, even though the study itself may not always result, or even claim to result, in absolute “validation” of one or another. In regard to Gurdjieff’s birth date, for instance, the validity of what is decipherable from his own text may be subject to dispute, but *that* he intentionally refrained from giving a straightforward date for his birth date in the whole gamut of his writings is a fact, and its validity hardly disputable—one that calls for further (albeit disputable) interpretation and explanation.

It is in this sense that Paul Ricoeur, for instance, both embraced and kept distance from the question of validity in advancing his hermeneutic approach. In his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986), for instance, while trying to understand Marx’s concept of ideology and the utopian thought of Saint-Simon and Fourier, he refrained from entering into the discussion of the validity of arguments advanced by one or another thinker. In the words of David Gordon, “Ricoeur displays his customary skill both in telling us what an author means and in comparing and contrasting texts. He rarely seems interested, though, in asking whether an argument is valid” (Gordon 1986:99). Similarly, Karl Simms (2002) has argued that Ricoeur “...sees it as his mission to draw out the hidden intentions behind written works, not to expose works as deceptive” (2).

The Hermeneutics of Gurdjieff

... *What then we can know about Gurdjieff's life can be construed by means of a critical hermeneutics applied to his own words and a careful probing of the testimony of those who shared experiences with him. Those experiences include hearing stories Gurdjieff told about himself which also invite hermeneutic exegesis.*

... *Gurdjieff as a subject for study merits careful research and scholarly attention. Judicious criticism can sift the useful from useless information and align what Gurdjieff says himself of his life in relation with verifiable accounts by others. Gurdjieff, as his father before him, was a teller of tales, a spinner of parables and a weaver of mysteries. What is needed to unveil them is a hermeneutic approach that can sift reliable from unreliable reporting about his life and that promises to probe the depth and unveil the breadth of the man in his writings.*

—Taylor 2004a

Paul B. Taylor has proposed the hermeneutic approach as the most viable method for the study of Gurdjieff's life and teaching. He advocates what appears to be a two-pronged approach involving a careful exploration of Gurdjieff's own writings on the one hand, and a "careful probing of the testimony of those who shared experiences with him," on the other. One may also add a third criterion of judging the above findings based on one's own experience and efforts at verification, to the extent these are possible.

Of course we cannot gloss over the fact that Gurdjieff himself intentionally hid and buried important ideas amid apparently fantastic and at times nonsensical stories. It will also be important to compare and contrast the findings arrived at via a close study of Gurdjieff's texts with those verifiably found in other scholarly (or other) writings. The question, however, is how can one determine the criteria used to "sift the reliable from the unreliable" in the secondary knowledges produced about Gurdjieff? Would the proposed two-pronged approach run, in practical terms, into methodological difficulties when outside data come to contradict certain data or inferences drawn from the study of Gurdjieff's own writings?

For instance, the secondary sources may interpret or even report Gurdjieff as saying that he no longer engaged in the practice of hypnotism following taking his oath, whereas we read in a rather straightforward way in his writings that his vow was not meant to extend to the conduct of his "scientific investigations." Moreover, Gurdjieff makes in *Herald* several explicit references to the fact that he had indeed practiced hypnotism in his teaching. Which of the two sets of data, some coming from secondary sources and others from Gurdjieff himself, would we consider to be reliable in regard to Gurdjieff's "real" intentions? What impact does the intentional or subconscious "exclusion" of *Herald* from our Gurdjieffian landscape have in interpreting who he was and what he meant to say? Is the continued confusion or controversy about the simple fact of Gurdjieff's birth date any less important of a "fact" than the actual figuring out of the date itself?

It is one thing to learn from secondary sources about what Gurdjieff claimed to have said and done in his life, and another to hear it from himself admittedly wrapped inside and beneath seemingly absurd tales. Relying on Gurdjieff's own texts does not necessarily imply that what Gurdjieff writes about his life and ideas are straightforward facts and transparent ideations. However, the knowledges derived from a close and hermeneutic analysis of Gurdjieff's texts do deserve to be given scholarly primacy for understanding his teaching, and also for discerning the needed criteria for informed judgment about the secondary sources on his life.

The purpose of such a hermeneutic study, as pursued in the present work, is not to "contextualize" Gurdjieff in history, nor is it to investigate the reliability of data provided by Gurdjieff about himself, but to interpret each fragment of his biographical or substantive data in relation to other fragments and their relation to his teaching as a whole. In other words, the purpose is to reconstruct the fragments he intentionally scattered around his texts in order to decipher their meanings in the context of the symbolic architecture of his perspective as reported in his writings. The purpose is to understand the "gist" of Gurdjieff's life, ideas, and teaching from the standpoint of Gurdjieff's own narrative. This may then be used to critique his ideas not from the standpoint of extraneous data or facts, but of the inner contradictions and logical inconsistencies of his own arguments.

The present study aims to demonstrate that adopting a hermeneutic method for understanding Gurdjieff's life and teaching through his writings is essential for decoding the central message or "gist" of his legacy. Applying the method, one seeks to derive the meaning of any part of a text by way of analyzing its relation to the meaning of the symbolic system as a whole. In the case of Gurdjieff's life and teaching, one cannot sidestep the important preliminary task of studying his encoded writings before proceeding to the important exploration of Gurdjieff in historical context, or gaining a critical appreciation of the secondary literature produced about his legacy.

Cross-checking what Gurdjieff said about himself and his teaching with the verifiable testimony of others can be useful and important. However, it is equally important to note that others' testimonies, even when verified, must still be contrasted with and weighed against what *and how* Gurdjieff wrote about himself and his ideas in his writings. The two research agenda are important, but this does not mean the two tasks should be necessarily performed in one and the same study. The volume and depth of Gurdjieff's writings require substantial dedication of time and space, as demonstrated by the scope of this study alone which intentionally focuses on Gurdjieff's own writings. References to or quotations from one or another of Gurdjieff's pupils are only used here to amplify or enhance the information derived from his writings. Even the various collections of talks attributed to Gurdjieff gathered by pupils and published in various sources, notably those

published under the title *Views from the Real World* (1984 [1973]), will not be a central focus of attention in the present study. For similar reasons, the highly regarded and widely read book, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (1949) by P. D. Ouspensky, Gurdjieff's senior pupil during his early teaching period, will be consulted only marginally, and mainly for the purpose of illustration.

The purpose of this Introduction has been to present an outline of Gurdjieff's teaching and autobiographical narrative, as well as justifications for adopting a hermeneutic approach as the most suitable method for exploring his teaching, life, and legacy. Chapters One, Two, and Three are devoted to a detailed reconstruction of Gurdjieff's philosophy of the harmonious universe in its ontological, psychological, and epistemological aspects. Chapter Four explicates Gurdjieff's "organ Kundabuffer" theory of human disharmonization, followed by Chapter Five in which the practical implications and strategies of Gurdjieff's teaching are presented, including Gurdjieff's efforts in regard to initiating, establishing, and continuing in new forms, his "Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man." The method of presentation up to that point will be to follow Gurdjieff's own *deductive* ordering of the material in his three series, an order of reading that he explicitly insisted upon as noted at the outset of his First Series. Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight include indepth critical reexaminations of the three series of Gurdjieff's writings as a whole (including his *The Herald of Coming Good*). The method in this critical reexamination of the material will be *inductive* and reverse in procedure, starting from the Third Series and moving on to the examination of the Second, and finally the First Series. In Conclusion, a summary of the arguments advanced in the book is presented, with some thoughts on the contributions and limitations of Gurdjieff's teaching in regard to both spiritual self-work and broader social transformation. The Appendix includes a detailed chronology of Gurdjieff's life based on his own writings.

For readers who are eagerly awaiting the explicit discussion of the place of hypnosis in Gurdjieff's life and teaching, and may think, glancing over the table of contents, that they may skip the first few, admittedly difficult, chapters to read the rest, I have to strongly advise them to think twice about it. First—to borrow the metaphor kindly used by J. Walter Driscoll in his Foreword—an appreciation of any tree in Gurdjieff's teaching and life as a whole can bear most fruit when it is conducted amid the labyrinth of the broader, bewildering forest of which it is an integral and inseparable part. Second, to point toward only a specific fragment in Gurdjieff's teaching and life (and by representation, in this book) to find an answer regarding the place of hypnosis in his teaching, would be, as another saying goes, like pointing the finger toward the moon, when the light is indeed everywhere.

Chapter One **PHILOSOPHY: ONTOLOGY OF THE HARMONIOUS
UNIVERSE**

“I repeat, my boy: Try very hard to understand everything that will relate to both these fundamental cosmic sacred laws, since knowledge of these sacred laws, particularly knowledge relating to the particularities of the sacred Heptaparaparshinokh, will help you in the future to understand very easily and very well all the second-grade and third-grade laws of World-creation and World-existence.

Likewise, an all-round awareness of everything concerning these sacred laws also conduces, in general, to this, that three-brained beings irrespective of the form of their exterior coating, by becoming capable in the presence of all cosmic factors not depending on them and arising round about them—both the personally favorable as well as the unfavorable—of pondering on the sense of existence, acquire data for the elucidation and reconciliation in themselves of that, what is called, ‘individual collision’ which often arises, in general, in three-brained beings from the contradiction between the concrete results flowing from the processes of all the cosmic laws and the results presupposed and even quite surely expected by their what is called “sane-logic”; and thus, correctly evaluating the essential significance of their own presence, they become capable of becoming aware of the genuine corresponding place for themselves in these common-cosmic actualizations.”

—B:755–756

Gurdjieff's philosophy can be explored at three distinct but interrelated planes. In this chapter I introduce his ontology of the harmonious universe and the place of human beings in it. In the following two chapters I will present his perspectives on the human psychological constitution and epistemology respectively.

Good and Evil

Gurdjieff's ontological universe is sacred and monotheistic. The mythological panorama in the First Series—where Beelzebub the “devil,” despite his youthful sins and archangelic powers still seeks, and is overjoyed by, his eventual pardon by our “COMMON FATHER OMNI-BEING ENDLESSNESS,” “MAKER CREATOR”—leaves no doubt that in Gurdjieff's universe only one god rules. Gurdjieff's “devil” is subordinate to God.

But the “devil” of Gurdjieff is not what humans have portrayed him to be—at least no longer. It is true that Beelzebub, like other members of his “tribe” has hoofs and a tail, and regains (eventually upon his pardon) his horns; however, he is a passionate, kind, and benevolent angel, telling fairy tales to his grandson Hassein, and is deeply concerned about the affairs of his God's universe and the fate of those poor creatures on that remote planet, the Earth.¹ Perhaps it was out of “revolutionary” concerns, in fact, that he had rebelled in his youth against what he considered to be “illogical” in the government of the universe (B:52), and because of this had been banished with his “comrades” by His “All-lovingness and All-forgiveness ... to one of the remote corners of the Universe, namely to the solar system

1. According to J. Walter Driscoll, “Gurdjieff claimed that his ideas are rooted in tradition now lost or largely unavailable in modern societies. The figure of a pardoned Beelzebub provides a striking example of an authentic but little known mythopoetic tradition that Gurdjieff exploits. His Beelzebub is alien to conventional Judeo-Christian traditions where ‘fallen angels’ are condemned for eternity—never pardoned, let alone elevated to a quasi-redemptive status. A unique scriptural and mythological tradition that was familiar to Gurdjieff and which contains a clear echo of the pardoned fallen angel, can be found among the Yezidi (pronounced Ya-she-dees and sometimes spelled Yazidis), a unique Kurdish tribe” (2004a:6–8). As cited by Driscoll from *The Encyclopedia of the Orient*, “The Yezidi creed has elements from Zoroastrianism, Manicheism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam” (Ibid.:7; also found at <http://www.i-cias.com/e.o/index.htm>). Driscoll also draws on the work of Giuseppe Furlani (1940) to substantiate his observation that for Yezidis indeed Melek Ta'us, or Angel Peacock, corresponding to the Devil in Christianity and Islam, “is supreme among the angels, who, after his fall and repentance, has been re-installed by God in his original and pre-eminent position” (Driscoll, 2004a:6–8). Of significance for Gurdjieff was the strange ritual he observed among Yezidis when he was a child (M:65–66), when he saw a Yezidi child could not get out of a circle drawn around him. Echoing this theme, Driscoll cites the following from Philip Kreyenbroek (1995) in *Yezidism: Its Background*: “... oaths are administered by drawing a circle on the ground. The inside of the circle is declared to be ‘the property of Melek Tawus,’ an observance which is paralleled in Zoroastrianism” (161). For another authoritative study of the Yezidis see John S. Guest's *Survival Among the Kurds: A History of the Yezidis* (1993).

‘Ors’ whose inhabitants call it simply the ‘Solar System’” (B:52; capitals here and hereafter in quotes are in the original). But now, having earned pardon and reconciliation and already received them from God, Beelzebub is on a journey back to his home planet.

The most significant conclusion to draw from the cosmic picture painted by Gurdjieff in the First Series commonly titled *Beelzebub’s Tales his Grandson* is that the dualism of “good” and “evil” does not exist as an *objective* fact in his universe. This is a shock Gurdjieff imparts to his reader’s mind from the very outset. Evil does not objectively exist, and what evil may exist, it is a human construct. This dualism (as in the case of heaven and hell, as we shall see later) is simply a product of human mind and behavior, made up once by a certain learned human being whom, for the purpose of historical tangibility, Gurdjieff imaginatively calls “a certain Makary Kronbernkzoin” (B:1127). Although Kronbernkzoin’s “evil” human act of making up this dualism is later discovered and condemned in the planet Purgatory where his higher-being-body resides, his invention has already infected humans across generations as a belief system:

“... after long and complicated researches, it became clear to them that the fundamental cause of the whole abnormality of the psyche of the three-brained beings arising on this planet was that a very definite notion arose and began to exist, that outside the essence of beings, as it were, there are two diametrically opposite factors—the sources of ‘Good’ and the sources of ‘Evil’—which are just the instigators for all their good and bad manifestations.

“It was then established by them that this universally disseminated maleficent idea, the data for which gradually became crystallized in each of them during their formation into preparatory age, already dominates their common psyche at their responsible existence and becomes on the one hand a tranquillizer and justifier of all their manifestations and on the other hand the fundamental impeding factor for the possibility which arises in certain of them for the self-perfecting of their higher being-parts.” (B:1125–26)

Gurdjieff’s God, thus, represents all goodness. “*Everything, without exception, all sound logic as well as historical data, reveal and affirm that God represents absolute goodness; He is all-loving and all-forgiving*” (L:24: italics in the original). If there was a so-called “Devil” (i.e., Beelzebub)—with a power somewhat equal to God at one time—who in his youth rebelled against God “by way of pride” proper to any “young and still incompletely formed individual” (L:24), the act itself of relegating such a force to a “beloved son” was still an act of an absolutely all-powerful God. This interpretation can be derived from the following passage in the Third Series where Gurdjieff, in search of a technique for uninterrupted remembering of his higher self or “I,” arrives at the universal analogy of God and the Devil:

At the same time why should He, being as He is, send away from Himself one of His nearest, by Him animated, beloved sons, only for the “way of pride” proper to any young and still incomplete individual, and bestow upon him a force equal but opposite to His own? ... I refer to the “Devil.” (L:24:italics in the original)

For Gurdjieff, therefore, the universe has one Creator and a unitary source of origin, while Beelzebub, or the so-called “Devil,” who is a beloved son of God and who in youth became rebellious but later repented and was forgiven, is not an objective source of evil in this world. The association, by humans, of their own evil acts to Beelzebub as an angel and “beloved son of God” is thereby not justified. The human evil is really of their own making. The question still remains, however: Why is there (human) evil in a universe created by a God of all-goodness?

As we shall see, the *possibility* of the rise of (human) “evil” in a universe created by a God of all-goodness is a result of the action of the mechanical laws that become increasingly operative down the “ray of creation” away from direct supervision and intervention of God at the center. The fact that God is the source of all-goodness does not mean that the universe is all good. The existence of the evil is thus explained by the absence of the good. Increasing mechanicalness down the ray of creation away from God is the source for the *possibility* of all “evil.” It follows, then, that it is in the struggle between the good and this *human conditioned* evil, that is between *consciousness* and *mechanicalness*, that the way back to God can be paved.

Matter and Mind

For Gurdjieff the universe is *created*. There *is* a Creator. For him, though, the Creator and the created are made of the same “matter.” The Creator is at the “center” of the created universe. The universe is a self-creating universe, with an intelligent Creator at its center. Everything existing, including the Creator Himself, is absolutely material (Ouspensky 1949:86; Gurdjieff 1984:209²) in nature and thus ultimately comprehensible—hence the reconciliation of the natural with the supernatural: “As above, so below.”³ In *Beelzebub* Gurdjieff writes:

“Etherokrilno is that prime-source substance with which the whole Universe is filled, and which is the basis for the arising and maintenance of everything existing ... (B:137)

2. “Everything in the world is material and—in accordance with universal law—everything is in motion and is constantly being transformed. The direction of this transformation is from the finest matter to the coarsest, and vice versa” (Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, 1984:209).

3. In the excerpt titled “Glimpses of Truth” reprinted in *Views from the Real World* (1984:22), Gurdjieff reportedly makes a reference to and builds his conversation around this Hermetic principle.

“Bear in mind, here, that it is just because of this that the mentioned Objective Science says that ‘everything without exception in the Universe is material.’” (B:138)

Gurdjieff calls the movement from fine to coarse matter “involution,” and the opposite, “evolution.” Universe is made of matter of descending (involutionary) and ascending (evolutionary) vibrations. The higher the *vibrations* of matter—that is, the higher its intelligence—the lower its *mechanicalness*; and vice versa. At the center of the universe resides the highest vibrating matter, while in the peripheries down the rays of creation, mechanicalness increases and vibrations of intelligence decrease. *Mechanicalness and intelligence of matter*, thereby, exist in inverse proportion to one another.

It follows from the above that, in Gurdjieff’s view, the all-pervasive materiality of the universe does not negate the notion of its all-pervasive intelligence, i.e., of its being constituted of more or less intelligent matter. For him, ‘matter’ and ‘mind’ refer to the same thing. Thereby, the distinction of matter and mind, characterizing the philosophies East and West, is non-existent. He retains his critical respect for science and all world religions, but with this distinction, he reconciles the worlds of religion and science, and thereby subscribes to a materialist spirituality, rendering the notion of the “supernatural” as redundant and nonsensical. Supernature, for Gurdjieff, is simply a subjective categorization of natural, of material, forces that have not yet been adequately understood by the human mind.

Creation and the Laws of Universe

In order to understand Gurdjieff’s ontological universe, we need to understand his philosophy of creation. Gurdjieff’s story of creation is important, for it supplies essential information about his interpretation of the most fundamental laws governing the universe, including human beings.

In order to understand more clearly Gurdjieff’s notion of what preceded and followed the act of creation, and how the laws of universe were modified in order to accomplish the act of creation, it is necessary to carefully review the passages in *Beelzebub* where he presents his most elaborate views on the subject in the guise of a cosmic fairy tale:

“In the beginning, when nothing yet existed and when the whole of our Universe was empty endless space with the presence of only the prime-source cosmic substance ‘Etherokrilno,’ our present Most Great and Most Holy Sun Absolute existed alone in all this empty space, and it was on this then sole cosmic concentration that our UNI-BEING CREATOR with HIS cherubim and seraphim had the place of HIS most glorious Being. (B:748–749)

“It was just during this same period of the flow of time that there came to our CREATOR ALL-MAINTAINER the forced need to create our present existing ‘Megalocosmos,’ i.e., our World.” (B:749)

Before creation, God maintained His residence by a system or principle Gurdjieff calls Autoegocrat involving two most fundamental primordial sacred laws, the Law of Seven (which Gurdjieff calls “Heptaparaparshinokh”) and the Law of Three (which he calls “Triamazikamno”). These two laws already existed and operated independently within the realm of God’s residential space before creation:

“... before this [creation], the Most Most Holy Sun Absolute was maintained and existed on the basis of the system called “Autoegocrat,” i.e., on that principle according to which the inner forces which maintained the existence of this cosmic concentration had an independent functioning, not depending on any forces proceeding from outside, and which were based also on those two fundamental cosmic sacred laws by which at the present time also, the whole of our present Megalocosmos is maintained and on the basis of which it exists, and namely, on the basis of those two fundamental primordial sacred cosmic laws, called the sacred Heptaparaparshinokh and the sacred Triamazikamno.” (B:750)

Gurdjieff then proceeds to provide a definition for each of the two cosmic laws. Regarding the Law of Seven, he writes:

“The first of these fundamental primordial cosmic sacred laws, namely, the law of Heptaparaparshinokh, present-day objective cosmic science, by the way, formulates in the following words:

“‘The-line-of-the-flow-of-forces-constantly-deflecting-according-to-law-and-uniting-again-at-its-ends.’

“This sacred primordial cosmic law has seven deflections or, as it is still otherwise said, seven ‘centers of gravity’ and the distance between each two of these deflections or ‘centers of gravity’ is called a ‘Stopinder-of-the-sacred-Heptaparaparshinokh.’

“This law, passing through everything newly arising and everything existing, always makes its completing processes with its seven Stopinders.” (B:750–51)

In regard to the Law of Three, which he calls the Sacred-Triamazikamno, Gurdjieff provides the following definition:

“A new arising from the previously arisen through the “Harnel-maiznel,” the process of which is actualized thus: the higher blends with the lower in order to actualize the middle and thus becomes either higher for the preceding lower, or lower for the succeeding higher[?]; ...” (B:751)

According to Gurdjieff, the Law of Three consists of three independent forces that may be called as follows:

“... the first, the ‘Affirming-force’ or the ‘Pushing-force’ or simply the ‘Force-plus’;

“the second, the ‘Denying-force’ or the ‘Resisting-force’ or simply the ‘Force-minus’;

“and the third, the ‘Reconciling-force’ or the ‘Equilibrating-force’ or the ‘Neutralizing-force.’” (B:751)

The two Laws of Seven and Three were, then (before creation), originally applied by God for the maintenance of His place of residence, the Most Most Holy Sun Absolute. The two laws were then operative in unison as two laws of maintenance (Law of Seven) and creation (Law of Three).

“And so, in the beginning as I have already told you, our Most Most Holy Sun Absolute was maintained by the help of these two primordial sacred laws; but then these primordial laws functioned independently, without the help of any forces whatsoever coming from outside, and this system was still called only the ‘Autoegocrat.’” (B:752–53)

Despite the visual overtones of his verbal formulations of the two laws, Gurdjieff does not provide any diagrammatic rendering of them in the First Series. Nor does he provide any diagram of the laws as functioning in the post-creation world. However, the post-creation Laws of Three and Seven in unison was conveyed by Gurdjieff to his senior pupil, P. D. Ouspensky—as reported in *In Search of the Miraculous* (1949)—and is somewhat known.

It is important to note that what later came to be known as the “enneagram”⁴ expresses the two laws of the universe as existing today, i.e., *after* creation, and *not* as how the Autoegocratic system was operating *before* creation. The essential difference between the two systems of laws, before creation (Autoegocrat) and after creation (what Gurdjieff later calls Trogoautoegocrat), was that in the first the system functions independent of outside forces, while in the second the system of functioning of the two laws is modified so as to be dependent on and responsive to outside forces. The reason this modification was made in the system of governance of the pre-creation universe to give way to the post-creation world can be understood as we further read Gurdjieff’s story of creation.

4. There is no doubt that Gurdjieff was originally the source of knowledge about the enneagram which is practiced and popularized today in New Age and psychological literature on personality types. However, it is noteworthy that the term “enneagram” does not appear even once in Gurdjieff’s own writings. For a recent indepth study of the “enneagram” in its wider forms, but particularly in relation to Gurdjieff’s conception of it, see James Jarvis’ doctoral dissertation “The Enneagram: Symbolism and Community in the Age of Aquarius” (2007). Also see Moore (1989).

The story goes as follows. While before creation God, an immortal being, did not need an outside world except for His own place of residence over which He had direct control, He soon realized that the place of His residence, the Sun Absolute, is itself subject to the passage of time.

“[O]ur CREATOR OMNIPOTENT once ascertained that this same Sun Absolute, on which He dwelt with His cherubim and seraphim was, although almost imperceptibly yet nevertheless gradually, diminishing in volume ...

“During this review our OMNIPOTENT CREATOR for the first time made it clear that the cause of this gradual diminishing of the volume of the Sun Absolute was merely the Heropass, that is, the flow of Time itself.” (B:749)

Having reviewed and realized the problem of time being responsible for the diminishing volume of the place of his residence, God decided then to create the outside world so as to counteract the diminishing volume of his own residence. However, in order for the outside world to have any impact on his independently (from outside forces) functioning residence, he had to modify the system of governance of his hitherto unique residence. This He did by making the previous internally and independently functioning system of primordial laws in his residence dependent on outside forces:

“And so, our ALL-MAINTAINING ENDLESSNESS decided to change the principle of the system of the functionings of both of these fundamental sacred laws, and, namely, HE decided to make their independent functioning dependent on forces coming from outside.” (B:752-53)

By applying the needed modifications to the functioning of the two cosmic laws, therefore, God made certain that the outside world He was forced to create could have an impact on the problem of the diminishing volume of His residence. That is, the expanding universe became a spatiotemporal mechanism to overcome and compensate for the gravitational self-implosive tendency of Time that was responsible for gradually diminishing the volume of God’s place of residence. Spatiotemporal infinitude of the universe neutralizes the “law of falling” or gravity acting on God’s residence over time. A never ending supply of outside forces keeps the self-implosive tendencies of God’s residence in check. One may regard this as Gurdjieff’s version of the Big Bang Theory.⁵

5. It is noteworthy that there is a “law of gravity” implicit in the functioning of the Law of Seven. That is why Gurdjieff calls the points of deflections in the Law of Seven, “centers of gravity.” One can read into the nature of this law of gravity, being enacted through the magnetic pull of God’s own existence, as functioning through the Law of Seven. In this sense, one may suggest that the universe is a mechanism to neutralize the gravitational pull of God’s being on everything that exists—including the place of his own residence—hence the need for an ever expanding universe. In this sense, for Gurdjieff the “Big Bang” of creation happened only once, and will not happen again.

The Post- and Pre-Creation Laws Compared

How were the two laws operating in the pre-creation universe? How was the act of creation accompanied by a change in the system of functioning of the two fundamental laws? What modifications allowed the newly created universe to effectively act as an outside force pulling on the self-implosive tendency of God's residence? How differently do the laws function in the pre- and post-creation periods?

The best way to illustrate the modifications to the operations of the laws from the pre- to post-creation periods is to use the diagrammatic language Gurdjieff introduced to his pupils, the essence of which is presented in the First Series as well. The "enneagram" introduced by Gurdjieff to the world reveals the functioning mechanism of the *post-creation* universe as a whole and of each of its parts such as the inner life of the human individual. Therefore, we need to explore whether from Gurdjieff's formulations in the First Series any diagrammatic representation of the *pre-creation* system of functioning of the two laws—and how it was modified to accommodate creation—can be derived.

The symbol that came to be known as "enneagram" (or the nine-pointed diagram) is comprised⁶ of a circle whose circumference is marked on nine equidistant points that are then numbered and connected to one another in a specific fashion. The manner of its construction is as follows: the unitary number, 1, divided by 7, gives a perpetually repeating fraction: 0.1428571428571.... This figure—diagrammatically rendered by successively connecting the points 1, 4, 2, 8, 5, 7, back to 1 on the circle—gives us the continuous zig-zag-line as shown in Figure 1.1.

Note that the numbers in the fraction exclude any multiples of 3. Points 3, 6, and 9, also derivable by the division of 1 into 3 (which yields the repeating fraction 0.33333...), are then separately connected with one another to form a triangle, shown in Figure 1.1 with broken lines.

The circle as a whole symbolizes the overall unitary Trogoautoegocratic (post-creation) system of operation of the two laws as created by God. This circle includes a seven-point movement (from 0 to 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8, then returning to 0) which involves seven "deflections" or "centers of gravity" whose successive distance from one another is shown above by a thick arrow; Gurdjieff calls each of these a "Stopinder." While this seven pointed, diamond-shaped figure represents the movement of the Law of Seven

6. Gurdjieff does not provide in his writings any specific information regarding the specific manner of construction of the enneagram. The original explanation of the way the enneagram is constructed was conveyed through P. D. Ouspensky in his *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (1949). The details of the presentation there, however, do correspond to the verbal descriptions given in the First Series (B:750–755) by Gurdjieff.

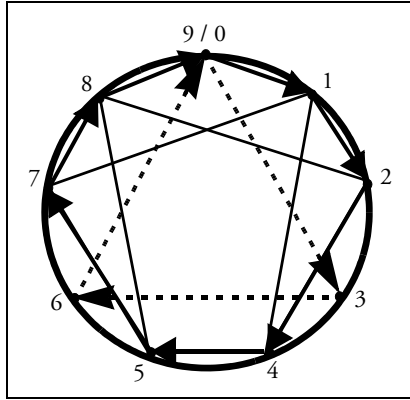


Figure 1.1 Post-Creation Functioning of the Two Fundamental Laws

(beginning at 0 on a line of flow of seven deflections and stopinders that returns to itself, in effect forming an octave), the triangle connecting 9/0, 3, 6, respectively (higher blending with the lower to actualize the middle) represents the Law of Three. Both laws are therefore diagrammatically bound into a single whole of a cycle or circle, which indicates that they operate in unison. Both the diamond⁷ and the triangle diagrams share the apex point of 0 where each whole cycle begins and ends. The whole diagram is symmetrical with respect to a vertical line passing through the point 0 and the center of the circle.

Gurdjieff has not provided us, either directly in his own series, or via his pupils, any diagrammatic representation of the *pre-creation* (Autoegocratic) version of the symbol. However, by tracing back the modification made in the act of creation to the pre-creation symbol, modifications which Gurdjieff, albeit in his cryptic language, does provide in the First Series, we

7. It is important to note here that in the enneagram the enclosed zig-zag line connecting 1, 4, 2, 8, 5, 7, and 1 respectively cannot itself be the diagrammatic representation of the Law of Seven as verbally formulated by Gurdjieff in the First Series. This zig-zag diagram has only six deflections and six "stopinders." It is the outer diamond-shaped diagram, including point 0, that represents the Law of Seven, as dividing 1 by 7 also includes the number 0 before the repeated decimals begin. The same can be said in regard to including number 0 in the triangular representation of the Law of Three (dividing 1 by three yields 0.3333... where 0 is also included as the starting point). The internal zig-zag figure represents the interactive operations of the Laws of Three and Seven together. In other words, contrary to the common interpretations of the zig zag line, the triangle, and the circle as representations of the Laws of Seven, Three, and their unitary operation as a whole respectively, Gurdjieff's verbal presentation of the enneagram in the First Series yields a different interpretation where the seven-point movement over the circle (0, 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, back to 0) and the triangle (0, 3, 6, 9/0) symbolically represent the Laws of Seven and Three, and the zig zag line represents the unitary and combined operation of the two laws in relation to one another.

can arrive at a pre-creation diagrammatic representation of the operational mechanism of the two laws. Before presenting this diagram, let us read over the passages in which Gurdjieff describes the way the modifications were introduced to the pre-creation system:

“Our COMMON FATHER OMNI-BEING ENDLESSNESS, having decided to change the principle of the maintenance of the existence of this then still unique cosmic concentration and sole place of HIS most glorious Being, first of all altered the process itself of the functioning of these two primordial fundamental sacred laws, and HE actualized the greater change in the law of the sacred Heptaparaparshinokh.

“These changes in the functioning of the sacred Heptaparaparshinokh consisted in this, that in three of its Stopinders HE altered the, what are called ‘subjective actions’ which had been until then in the Stopinders, in this respect, that in one HE lengthened the law conformable successiveness; shortened it in another; and in a third, disharmonized it.” (B:753)

Note here that according to Gurdjieff the functioning of *both* laws were changed, though the greater change was actualized in the Law of Seven. I will elaborate further on Gurdjieff’s descriptions of these changes shortly; however, at this point it is important to note that the *results* of these three modifications are *already symbolized* in the *post*-creation enneagram as described above and commonly known. What is not yet clear is how such modifications are compared to the *pre*-creation enneagram.

For a reader who is unfamiliar with Gurdjieff’s teaching these formulations may appear quite abstract, if not irrelevant. However, as will be seen later, what Gurdjieff is really doing with these abstract themes and concepts describing the laws of the universe as a whole is *also* describing the inner functioning of the human organism. The greater God and the inner god for Gurdjieff are made of the same matter and laws. As above, so below.

In order to appreciate the differences made in the modification of the two laws, let us go back and reconstruct the pre-creation diagram using a different, simpler procedure. Let us divide the circle’s circumference (as representing 1) into *seven* points and stopinders of *equal* distance/length, each equaling $0.1428571\dots$ in value relative to the length of the circumference as a whole. Let us also divide the circumference (representing 1) into 3, yielding three points also of equal distance from one another. Having marked these points, let us number them clockwise from 0 to 9, beginning from the apex. The zig-zag line connecting numbers 1, 4, 2, 8, 5, 7, and back to 1, also can still be drawn. The enneagram version that we thus obtain would be as in Figure 1.2. Note that the elongated diamond shape of the *post*-creation figure previously drawn is now represented by a “harmonious” equilateral seven-pointed diagram. All stopinders are of equal length, and all deflections of the same angle.

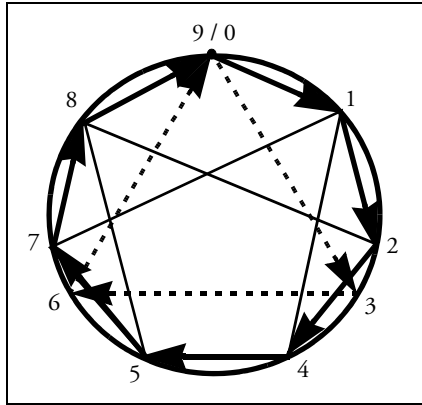


Figure 1.2 Pre-Creation Functioning of the Two Fundamental Laws

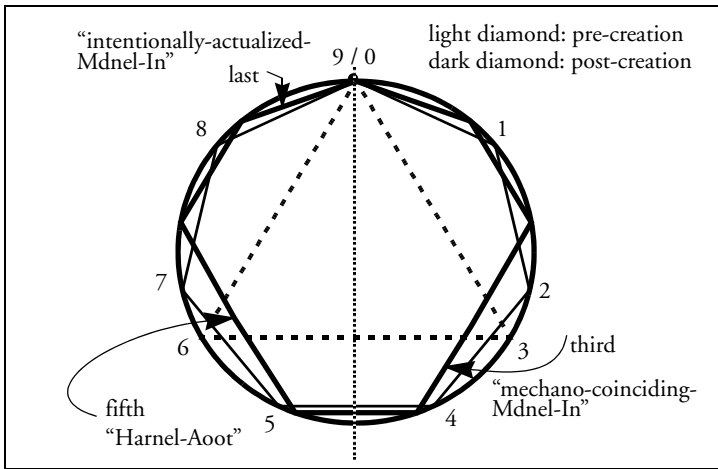


Figure 1.3 Pre- and Post-Creation Diagrams of the Two Laws Superimposed

If we superimpose the seven pointed figures from the pre- and post-creation diagrams on the same circle, as in Figure 1.3, we notice that in them, the third stopinder of the pre-creation diagram is lengthened in the post-creation diagram, the last stopinder shortened, and the fifth stopinder has been “disharmonized” in the sense that as a result of the change in the first two above-mentioned stopinders (third and seventh/last), following the principle of symmetry with respect to the vertical line passing through the apex, the other stopinders (especially more so for the fifth stopinder in

terms of its length) have become “disharmonized” as well.⁸ The three pointed triangle has not changed shape or positions; however, the locations in which points 3 and 6 appear with respect to the third and fifth stopinders have now changed. The “harmonious” shape of an equilateral seven pointed diagram thus became “disharmonized” in the sense that two of its stopinders in particular became longer, while a third (along with the rest) of its stopinders were shortened.

For Gurdjieff, the “subjective” *meaning* attached to such a diagrammatically represented modification to the system of functioning of the two laws is *very important*. Let us examine the subjective meaning of such modifications to the stopinders.

The essential point of the modification, as mentioned above, was to make an independently functioning system of laws dependent on outside forces. This allowed the reception of outside forces in order to help offset, or neutralize, the inner self-implosive tendencies of the functioning of the pre-creation system.

How did the pre-creation system function?

In many ways, the pre-creation system of laws was much simpler. There were no outside forces to be reckoned with. There was only a unique, solely existing, Sun Absolute, which was directly, consciously, and intentionally created and maintained by God Himself. The laws were directly applied and processed by Him. The maintenance of the system was symbolized by the ever repeating cycle of seven stopinders beginning at the apex and coming back to itself without any need for added force or energy to renew the process as a whole since God Himself supplied the necessary “shocks” from and out of Himself. The maintenance of this energy and movement was itself assured by the action of three shocks exerted by God consciously at points 0, 3, and 6, just when they were needed, in order to bring the cycle back to point 9 where cyclical renewal took place.

The internal mechanism of how the process of renewal was assured *through the operation of both laws* can be illustrated by the movement of the zig-zag movement in conjunction with the three shock exertions. The movement as a whole can be seen as a larger triad of three smaller inner triads:

Triad of forces near 3: 1 to 4 (force plus), 4 to 2 (force minus)—shock at 3—forces 2 to 8 (force reconciled, itself acting as a force plus for the next triad);

8. On the basis of Gurdjieff’s account of modifications to stopinders, it would be impossible to change any stopinder without affecting the length of its adjacent stopinder accordingly. It is obvious, then, that with the changes in the three mentioned stopinders (third, fifth, and last or seventh), the whole shape and length of the seven-pointed figure will be modified. The original impetus, or “shocks,” for such a change, though, come from the third and last stopinders.

Triad of forces near 6: 2 to 8 (force plus), 8 to 5 (force minus)—shock at 6—forces 5 to 7 (force reconciled, itself acting as a force plus for the next triad);

Triad of forces near 9/0: 5 to 7 (force plus), 7 to 1 (force minus)—shock at 0/9—forces 1 to 4 (force reconciled, itself acting as a force plus for the next triad, beginning a new cycle).

The broader triadic cycle then begins again.

The total forces generated and lost as a result of movement from 1, through 4, 2, 8, 5, 7, and back to 1 equals zero. (1 to 4=+3, 4 to 2=-2, 2 to 8=+6, 8 to 5=-3, 5 to 7=+2, 7 to 1=-6; adding the energies added or lost, +3-2+6-3+2-6, equals 0). The system is thus maintained without any force gained or lost overall in the movement 0-1-2-4-5-7-8-0 (Law of Seven). And the three shocks at 3, 6, and 9, have made this possible (Law of Three).

The inner movement of forces across the zig-zag line appears on the outer surface of the circle as an octave movement that starts with each shock point and comes back to that point, skipping the other two shocks. For example, the octave beginning with the shock at 0/9 follows the path of 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and comes back to 0/9. The octave beginning with the shock at 3 follows the path of 4, 5, 7, 8, 1, 2, and comes back to 3. Likewise, the octave beginning with the shock at 6 follows the path of 7, 8, 1, 2, 4, 5, and returns to 6. There is a pattern of three interpenetrating octave movements, or a triad of octaves as a whole, each octave of which gives birth to the other two octaves at two specific moments (first and second skipped shock points) in its circuit. According to the Law of Three, the higher octave 9 blends with the lower octave 3 in order to actualize the octave 6 in the middle. In other words, octave 9 splits into itself and its opposite octave 3, but then also gives birth to (or makes possible) a third octave 6 which helps reconcile the opposition, thus beginning a whole new cycle of an octave triad—*ad infinitum* (see Figure 1.4).

It is crucially important to note here—for it goes to the heart of Gurdjieff's notion of harmonious development of "three-brained (human) beings," as we shall see—that the third, reconciling, octave begins with the combined action of forces generated from the previous two octaves plus the additional third shock itself which initiates the third octave. The combined and harmonious actions of all the three octaves is necessary for the completion cycle of creative maintenance of the system as a whole.

To express differently the pre-creation system of the Laws of Three and Seven as expressed in the pre-creation enneagram: *a whole initiated by a force affirming it inevitably⁹ generates also a denying force conflicting with the whole,*

9. The "inevitability" and "potentiality" are important here for Gurdjieff, and this is why he distinguishes the first "mechanical" from the other two stopinders in the formulation of the operation of the Law of Seven.

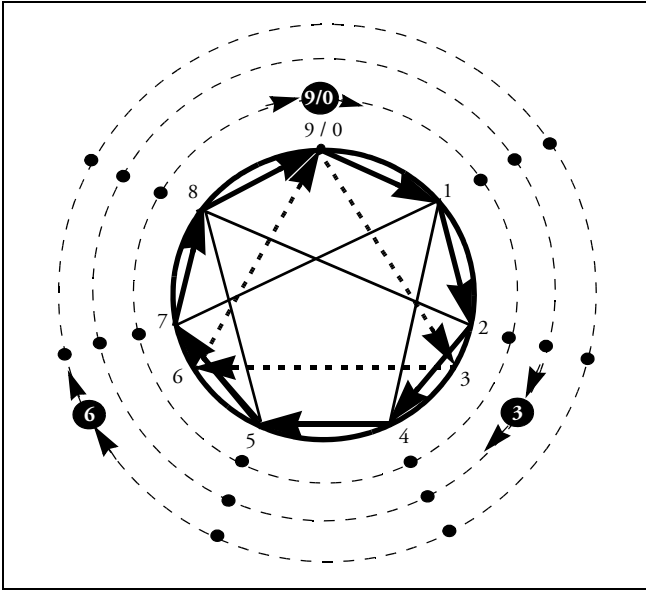


Figure 1.4 The Triadic System of Octaves Each Beginning at Successive Shock Points

both of which can be potentially reconciled by a third force generated amid their conflict. To put it in a slightly different way: a whole is constituted of three affirming, denying, and reconciling creative forces the sum total of whose law-conformable successiveness maintains the whole.

What was the problem in the pre-creation system and why modification became necessary?

The self-implosive tendency of the pre-creation system is represented by the infinite continuous fraction that results from the division of 1 by either 7 or 3. In either case, the length of each of the stopinders of the seven-sided diagram, or of the distance between the three shocks to motivate the system as a whole, cannot be ascertained in any exact way, falling slightly but always definitely short upon each renewal. The sum total of renewing forces upon the completion of each cycle negligibly falls short of the required momentum. This diagrammatic interpretation of the self-implosive tendency of the Autoeocratic system provides a clue to the significance of the nature of modifications brought about by the act of creation, involving modifications to the length of stopinders.

To offset or neutralize the self-implosive tendency of the pre-creation system, God was “forced to” create an external “mechanism” of gravitational pull, i.e., an ever “enlarging world” (B:778). But, in order for that

“mechanism” to act upon the hitherto independently functioning Autoegocratic system, God had to also change the system of functioning of the two primordial laws so that the Sun Absolute would now be opened to the gravitational pull of outside forces. Here the diagrammatic representation of modifications to the length of stopinders near the shock points proves instructive.

It is important to note again that the modifications to the original system affected the functioning of *both* laws. Although the positioning of the shock points on the circle of the triangle was not changed, the subjective *meanings and actions* of these shocks with respect to the stopinders of the Law of Seven were modified in the process. What were the subjective *meanings and actions* of the shock points before creation?

In the Autoegocratic system, where there were no outside forces to be reckoned with, all the three shocks at 0/9, 3 and 6, were directly exerted by the Creator, variously manifested, using Christian terminology, as the God, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (B:752). Gurdjieff, using Christian prayer terminology, also refers to the triad, “Holy God,” “Holy Firm,” and “Holy Immortal”—or “Rejoicings, revolts, and sufferings” (B:752). Gurdjieff parallels this triadic identifications with the Holy Affirming, Holy Denying, and Holy Reconciling forces of the Law of Three respectively in the pre-creation Autoegocratic system. Although Gurdjieff does not do this in the text, these three forces may be associated respectively with the three shock points at 0/9, 3, and 6.

The fundamental difference between the pre-creation and post-creation systems, each involving both laws, was that the independent functioning of the former became, in the latter, dependent on forces coming from outside (B:752–53). Instead of one unique cosmic formation *independently* functioning on its own, now we have cosmic formations whose functionings are *interdependent* on one another. The changes were introduced through the three stopinders of the Law of Seven adjacent to the three shock points of the Law of Three. The laws themselves were not altered; in other words, the Law of Seven still involved a cyclical seven stopinder movement and the Law of Three still involved the three forces playing affirming, denying, and reconciling roles in relation to one another and with respect to the Law of Seven as a whole. The changes to the laws only affected the functioning of both laws with respect to the independent vs. dependent functioning of the two systems.

We need to understand how, for Gurdjieff, the change in the functioning of both laws at the three shock points/stopinders resulted in the transformation of an independent system into an interdependently functioning one.

The degree of dependence of the new system on outside forces is not similar across the three shock points in the post-creation system. At point 3, it is made *wholly dependent* without need for any intentional action on the

part of the thing itself; at point 0/9 its dependence on outside forces is itself made dependent on the *intentional action* of the thing itself; and at point 6, the dependence *varies* according to how the shock point at 0/9 is applied with respect to the conditions surrounding the thing itself. The first shock is *inevitable and automatic*, the second is *intentional*, and the third conditional on the *conscious* choice of the thing itself. These changes, cryptically described by Gurdjieff himself in the First Series (B:753–55), may be more directly expressed as follows.

Third stopinder adjacent to shock point 3:

“And, namely, with the purpose of providing the ‘requisite inherency’ for receiving, for its functioning, the **automatic** affluence of all forces which were near, HE lengthened the Stopinder between its third and fourth deflections.

“This same Stopinder of the sacred Heptaparaparshinokh is just that one, which is still called the ‘**mechano**-coinciding-Mdnel-In.’” (B:753–54; bold added)

To put it in other words, in order to allow the third stopinder to mechanically/automatically receive an abundant inflow of shocks from outside without need for any intentional action by the thing itself, it was lengthened. This stopinder now automatically or mechanically receives shocks from the outside, and thus makes the life of the thing dependent on outside forces emanating from other things.

Seventh stopinder adjacent to shock point 0/9:

“And the Stopinder which HE shortened, is between its last deflection and the beginning of a new cycle of its completing process; by this same shortening, for the purpose of facilitating the commencement of a new cycle of its completing process, HE predetermined the functioning of the given Stopinder to be dependent only upon the affluence of forces, obtained from outside through that Stopinder from the results of the **action** of that cosmic concentration **itself** in which the completing process of this primordial fundamental sacred law flows.

“And this Stopinder of the sacred Heptaparaparshinokh is just that one, which is still called the ‘**intentionally**-actualized-Mdnel-In.’” (B:754; bold added)

To put this in other words, in order to make the seventh stopinder’s function of commencing a new cycle dependent on outside forces but only through an intentional shock action exerted by the thing itself, it was shortened. The thing acquires the *possibility* of a choice to decide whether it is to be subjected to outside forces or not. This dependence on outside force at point 0/9, contrary to the automatic functioning of the shock at point 3, is thereby made *intentional*, i.e., dependent on the *action* of the thing itself.

Fifth stopinder adjacent to shock point 6:

“As regards the third Stopinder, then changed in its ‘subjective action’ and which is fifth in the general successiveness and is called ‘Harnel-Aoot,’ its disharmony flowed by itself from the change of the two aforementioned Stopinders.

“This disharmony in its subjective functioning, flowing from its asymmetry so to say in relation to the whole entire completing process of the sacred Heptaparaparshinokh, consists in the following:

“If the completing process of this sacred law flows in conditions, where during its process there are many ‘extraneously-caused-vibrations,’ then all its functioning gives only external results.

“But if this same process proceeds in absolute quiet without any external ‘extraneously-caused-vibrations’ whatsoever, then all the results of the action of its functioning remain within that concentration in which it completes its process, and for the outside, these results only become evident on direct and immediate contact with it.

“And if however during its functioning there are neither of these two sharply opposite conditions, then the results of the action of its process usually divide themselves into the external and the internal.” (B:754–55)

The third shock at point 6 plays a reconciling role in the functioning of the Law of Three. Previously, in the pre-creation system, this force was also functioning independent of outside influences since both of its constituent affirming and denying forces were functioning independently. Now, however, with the affirming force exerted at shock point 0/9 having become *potentially* dependent on outside forces through intentional action, and the denying force at shock point 3 having become mechanically/automatically dependent on outside forces, the reconciling functioning of the third force of the Law of Three has by itself changed and becomes disharmonized in terms of its internal or external results. Its functioning is now dependent on how the thing itself reacts to the surrounding conditions outside during the completion cycle of the Law of Seven culminating at 0/9.

If, at point 0/9, one abundantly allows for the influence of outside forces and thus becomes preoccupied with external action, then the reconciling force stored in the fifth stopinder also becomes preoccupied mainly with producing external results. If, at point 0/9, one avoids the influence of outside forces and becomes preoccupied with internal action in a state of “absolute quiet,” then the reconciling force stored in the fifth stopinder produces only internal results (which become evident only when others come in direct contact with one). If, at point 0/9, one allows for the influence of both externally and internally generated forces and thus becomes involved in intentional inner and outer actions, then the

reconciling force stored in the fifth stopinder also becomes preoccupied with both internal and external results.

The Ray of Creation

Having changed the system of laws operative in the Sun Absolute, God then created the universe outside so as to produce the external forces necessary to offset the self-implosive tendencies of the Sun Absolute. Gurdjieff's story of how this act of creation was itself initiated by God, and how the new Trogoautoegocratic system perpetuated itself mechanically down each ray of creation, follows from his exposition, albeit in condensed and cryptic manner, of the two fundamental laws of the universe:

“And so, my dear boy, our COMMON FATHER CREATOR ALMIGHTY, having then in the beginning changed the functioning of both these primordial sacred laws, directed the action of their forces from within the Most Holy Sun Absolute into the space of the Universe, whereupon there was obtained the what is called ‘Emanation-of-the-Sun-Absolute’ and now called, ‘Theomertmalogos’ or ‘Word-God.’” (B:756)

An important element in Gurdjieff's story of creation is the notion that God's “Will Power” only intervened at the beginning of the process of creation, when he spread the “Word-God” across the empty space through the apex stopinder of the Sun Absolute; the remaining stages of the process were then accomplished mechanically, without God's direct intervention, through the operation of the modified sacred laws—thanks especially to the mechanical shock at point 3:

“The subsequent creation went on automatically, of its own accord, entirely without the participation of His Own Divine Will Power, thanks only to these two changed fundamental cosmic laws.” (B:756)

To delineate the overall picture of how the present universe was created, Gurdjieff proceeds to provide us with the system of terminologies for distinguishing various cosmoses (“relatively independent concentrations”), together with their particular “results,” that is their emanations or radiations. Figure 1.5 illustrates the enneagramatic path of the ray of creation. The Word-God acting as an affirming force upon the denying force of “prime-source cosmic substance Etherokrilno” (B:756) permeating the empty universe—given the new particularities of the fifth stopinder that allows the forces to be retained internally in case of lack of external vibrations in the surrounding empty space—led to the self-gravitational momentum creating new cosmic concentrations. These cosmic concentrations would be the origins of clusters of galaxies gravitating to their centers, i.e., to what Gurdjieff would regard as the first-order suns (see point 1 in Figure 1.5).

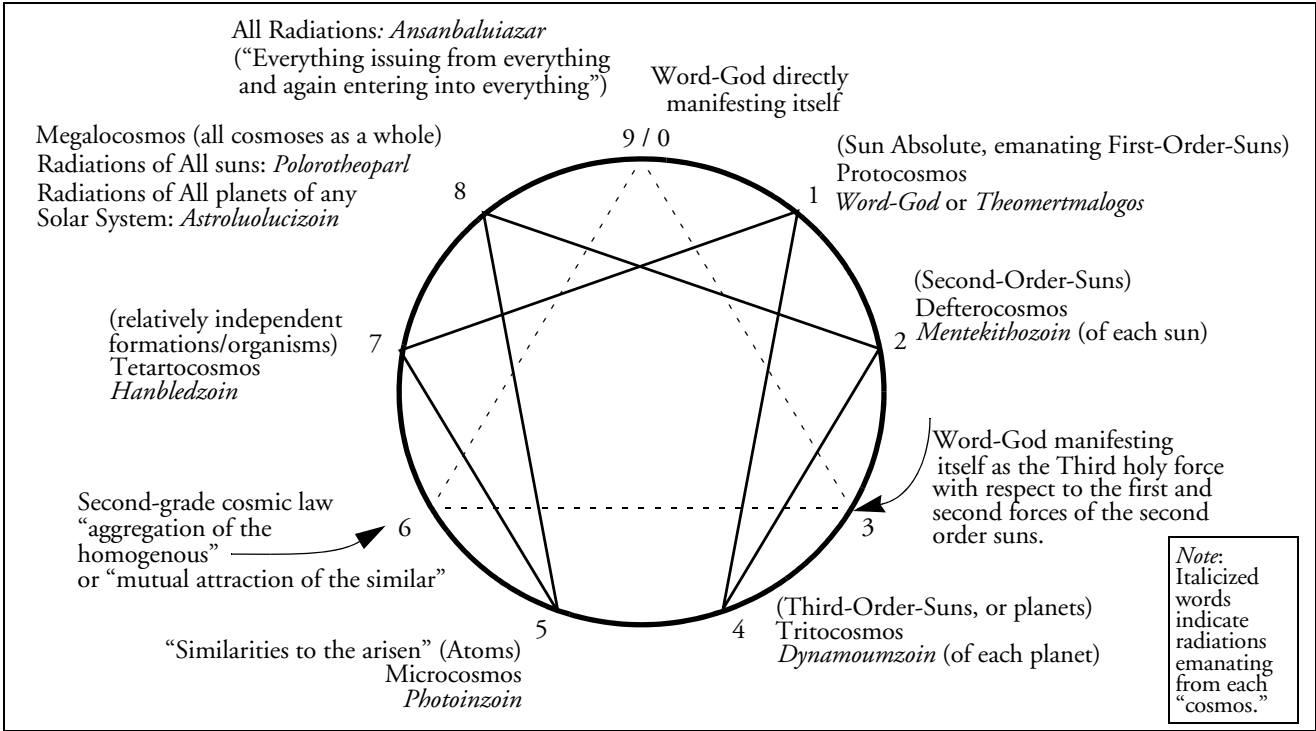


Figure 1.5 The First Outer Cycle of the Law of Seven as Enacted in the Process of Creation

Due to the transubstantiated operation of the two modified laws at a lower level within these cosmic concentrations, what Gurdjieff calls “Second-order-Suns” (see point 2 in Figure 1.5) were then formed, or, in Gurdjieff’s words, “crystallized” (B:757). The Sun in our own solar system is an example of these second-order-suns (the first-order-sun having been the galaxy clusters). Note here that each second-order-sun exists now in the environment of gravitational forces externally imposed on it both by: 1-the Sun Absolute (acting through the Word-God); 2-the immediate and other first-order suns (galaxy clusters); and 3-other second-order-suns within and outside the cosmic concentration (own galaxy). In other words, they operate under more laws, and thereby are more “mechanical” than the first-order-sun, the Sun Absolute. The lower we come down the ray of creation, the more laws become operative, and the more mechanical matter becomes.

At this point in the creation (see point 3 in Figure 1.5), the Word-God manifested itself as the third holy force of the Law of Three with respect to the gravitational push and pull forces of all the suns created:

“The Most Most Holy Theomertmalogos began to manifest itself in the quality of the third holy force of the sacred Triamazikamno; the results of any one of the newly arisen Second-order-Suns began to serve as the first holy force; and the results of all the other newly arisen Second-order-Suns in relation to this mentioned one newly arisen Sun, as the second holy force of this sacred law.” (B:757)

Through the action of the two laws within the cosmic concentrations, this time with the “second-order-suns” themselves acting as the new affirming and denying forces, the planets, or what Gurdjieff calls the “third-order-suns,” were born (see point 4 in Figure 1.5). The Earth is an example of these “third-order” suns. Planets operate under even more laws, and are thereby even more mechanical than the first and second-order-suns. At this point, however, the actualization of the outer cycle of the Law of Seven, moving down the points 1 (first-order-suns), 2 (second-order suns), and 4 (third-order suns, or planets) ceases, or rather internalizes within the planet itself since by this time the original impulse of the Word-God has lost half of its power. This leads to the formation on these third-order-suns, or planets, of what Gurdjieff calls “similarities-to-the-already-arisen.” These would be the atomic systems of lower to higher densities representing the elements (see point 5 in Figure 1.5).

And here comes a crucial moment as far as humanity is concerned. To regain the momentum to complete the octave of the Law of Seven, the internalization of the force within the planet now results in a process of “evolution” *as well as* continued “involution” in order to replicate the original intelligence contained in the Word-God, though at a lower scale on the planet. This is done according to the action of a second-grade cosmic

law of “aggregation of the homogenous” (B:758), which tends to bring or group together new formations that are “relatively independent” (see point 6 in Figure 1.5). The processes of evolution and involution lead to the gradual formation of these new “relatively independent” entities, starting with the “active elements” (B:759), and eventually a system of “reciprocal feeding and maintaining of each other’s existence” (B:759) is established among these relatively independent entities. This process enables the preservation of energy through a process Gurdjieff calls “Iraniranumange,” which means “common-cosmic-exchange-of-substances” (B:759).

It is important to note that in the process of creation, or involution, down the ray of creation from the Sun Absolute, the formation of microcosmoses (atomic systems) *follows* the formation of third-order-suns (planets), and it is in the return journey back from the microcosmos toward Protocosmos (Sun Absolute) that the elements and higher organisms are formed in the process of evolution. Evolution is thus the path of development of the creative forces *back* toward God. Creation (involution) and evolution are thereby both incorporated in Gurdjieff’s cosmology, and the two are roughly represented respectively in the enneagram as the right and left sides of the movement on the circle, clockwise.

Now, the new cosmic system of Trogoautoegocracy, in which the Sun Absolute itself participates (B:759), is finally established and serves the purpose of relieving the “Divine anxiety” (B:759) of God in making sure the wholeness of his place of residence will be forever assured.

In regard to the process of involution and evolution in the ray of creation, it is absolutely crucial to conceive the resulting “cosmic concentrations” in terms of the *whole-part schema*. This is what Gurdjieff elsewhere refers to in terms of the need for a “new language” (1984:60–74). Everything that proceeds the act of creation—that is, the formation of the first-order-suns—is *within* the emanations of the Sun-Absolute, i.e., Word-God or Theomertmalogos. When we speak of a “cosmic concentration” of the first-order-sun, the second-order-sun is a *part of it and its emanations* and *not* apart from it. Likewise, the Sun in our Solar System is not limited to the Sun per se, but *includes* the Earth as a third-order-sun. Similarly, the Earth *includes* not only microcosmoses and elements, and the Tetartocosmoses of living organisms including human life, but also the moon. Earthly existence and life as it exists could not be conceived of without moon as its constitutive part. And Megalocosmos includes all *creations* resulting from human life and action. The best way to conceive of the ray of creation, then, is by adopting the whole/part language. This conception is crucial for it is the only one that allows for considering each successive part as containing the elements of the whole constituting it, and making possible the consideration of the above and below as simultaneous terrains of the operations of the two universal Laws of Seven and Three.

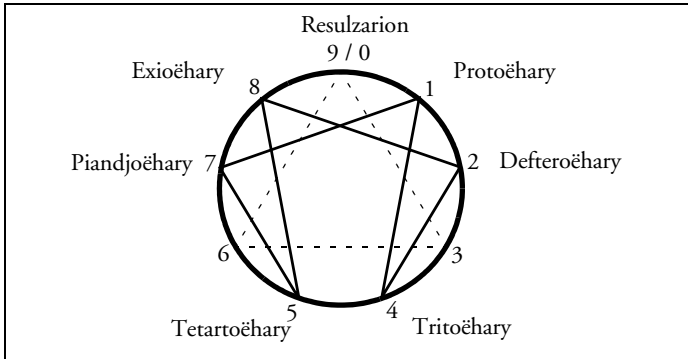


Figure 1.6 “Centers of Gravity” Crystallizations in a Tetartocosmos

Gurdjieff suggests that within each and all cosmos(es) particular “crystallizations” that have “temporarily independent centers of gravity” arise that correspond to the “centers of gravity” of the developmental Law of Seven as representable on the enneagram. However, given the vast number of these crystallizations for all cosmoses, he proceeds to name (B:761) only the crystallizations arising in only one of these cosmoses, namely that of Tetartocosmoses, which as we shall see in following chapters includes living and in particular human organisms. If we correspond these terminologies with various developmental points in the movement of the enneagram, we arrive at the representations as shown in Figure 1.6.

Note that the placing of each crystallization in Figure 1.6 corresponds to the position of each cosmic concentration on the general creation enneagram as indicated in Figure 1.5. The two exceptions are at points five and seven, where the crystallizations should have corresponded to the microcosmoses and other Tetartocosmoses respectively. Perhaps this displacement is due to the fact that the phenomena under consideration is a Tetartocosmos. Other crystallizations on the centers of gravity correspond to the cosmic concentrations—for our ray of creation for example: Sun Absolute at 1, the Sun at 2, the Earth at 4, all cosmoses (including all planets and all suns) at 8, and God at 9/0. At point 5, the crystallization corresponds to the level of Tetartocosmos. Gurdjieff’s terminology does not allow us to ascertain whether the crystallization at point 7 (Piandjoëhary) corresponds to the level of microcosmoses.

A Harmonious Universe?

Did the harmonious *pre-creation* universe of the Sun Absolute become disharmonious as a result of God’s act of creating the Megalocosmos?

Gurdjieff’s ontology provides a *conditional* answer to this fundamental question. Potentially, it *can be* harmonious, but it can also turn out to be, at

times and in places, disharmonized. *Now, it all depends.* Instead of a pre-creation system that was functioning completely in the absence of, and therefore independently from, any outside forces, we now have a system that is dependent on outside forces while also giving its parts the *possibility* of conscious and intentional choice of becoming relatively independent as well, provided that one exerts conscious and intentional shocks in a predetermined way to itself at specific moments. Necessity and freedom, in other words, are simultaneously incorporated into the functioning of the new Trogoautoegocratic system of a Megalocosmos of interdependent cosmic concentrations. This way God provided itself as well with the choice of allowing as much outside force as is necessary to offset the internal self-implosive tendencies of the Sun Absolute. However, in doing so, He imparted to all things He created, in different degrees, their *potentiality* of becoming like Himself through conscious and intentional effort.

In the Autoegocratic pre-creation system, the three creative shocks that helped maintain the system's cyclical renewal were exerted internally by God Himself. In that sense it was a perfect system. It was self-perpetuating, and thus immortal. In the Trogoautoegocratic post-creation system, however, by changing the functioning of the three shock forces of the Law of Three to be operative in mechanical, conscious, and intentional ways, the renewal cycle of the system becomes dependent on forces received from outside, but only in such a way that a degree of relative independence is maintained for the part. The post-creation, Trogoautoegocratic¹⁰ system of functioning of the two fundamental laws makes necessary an interdependent, reciprocally feeding and maintaining, system of cosmic concentrations, while also providing the possibility, in specific cosmic centers, of formation of relatively independent, consciously and intentionally self-perpetuating and self-perfecting, beings. In many ways, the Trogoautoegocratic system does not abolish the Autoegocratic system, but further "perfects" it in the senses that (1) it overcomes forever the "negligible" internal self-implosive inertia of the original system, and (2) it retains the *possibility* for specific concentrations, including the Sun Absolute, of achieving the independent, self-perpetuating, and immortal, functioning of the original system.

What is possible for God at a cosmic scale now becomes possible for *some* cosmic concentrations at lower scales of creation, depending on the degree of *their own* self-conscious and intentional actions. God thus created the human beings in its own image (B:775). As above, so below.

10. The addition of the prefix "Trogo-" (from Greek, "to eat") to Autoegocrat is meant to draw attention to the newly established "reciprocal feeding" mechanism fundamentally maintaining the post-creation universe. Before, it was directly controlled by God. Now, it is controlled indirectly by Him through a reciprocal feeding mechanism in which potentially godlike creatures endowed with the possibility of conscious and intentional action could also participate.

Chapter Two **PHILOSOPHY: PSYCHOLOGY OF A “TETARTOCOSMOS”**

“In other words, every wish of the planetary body is taken as undesirable for the higher divine part which has to be coated and perfected, and therefore all three-centered beings of our Great Megalocosmos constantly carry on a relentless struggle against the wishes of their planetary bodies so that there should be formed in them, in this struggle from the what is called ‘Disputekrialnian-friction,’ those sacred crystallizations from which their higher Divine being-part arises and is perfected in them.

“In this constant struggle of theirs, the equilibrating harmonizing principle is their second being-body, which in their own individual law of Triamazikamno represents the neutralizing source; and therefore this second being-part always remains indifferent to their mechanical manifestations, but for all their active manifestations it always tends according to the second-grade cosmic law ‘Urdekhplifata’ to unite with those desires of which there are more whether in one or the other of the two mentioned opposite being-parts.”

—B:802

Tetartocosmos, defined by Gurdjieff as “relatively-independent-formation-of-the-aggregation-of-microcosmoses” (B:762), is a universal term Gurdjieff uses for living things, especially human beings. The reason he does not use the more common name “human being” is that—aside from stylistic and pedagogical considerations, and aside from the fact that

the human being is only one of the (higher) forms of Tetartocosmic being—he envisages the possibility of other living and intelligent creatures in other parts of the universe that could fall under this category.

Gurdjieff's conception of the Tetartocosmos as the *involutionary* result of all the preceding cosmoses is that it contains all other cosmoses within itself, as its own "centers of gravity." That is, the Sun Absolute, the Sun, the Earth, the atomic elements, and the *potentialities* of development of higher elements are already prefigured in the biological mechanism of certain Tetartocosmoses—though in different degrees, with human beings having the highest potentials on Earth. In the diagrammatic representation of Gurdjieff's terminological system, as noted in Chapter One, it is important to consider each cosmos as encompassing the following cosmos as a part of itself, in light of the fact that each cosmos is defined in terms which *include* its radiations and emanations (or what Gurdjieff calls "results"). As such, a human being has already elements of the Sun Absolute, all suns, the Sun, all planets, the Earth, microcosmic structures, and the Megalocosmos as a whole, etc., in her/himself. Human beings, or more generally (including certain higher extraterrestrial) Tetartocosmoses, are universes in miniature.

The key question in Gurdjieff's philosophy, as in other mystical systems, is to explain how the *evolution* of human beings back to God can be made possible. The alchemy of this process rests, according to Gurdjieff, interestingly, on the way in which the last, procreative, stopinder in the biological enneagram of higher Tetartocosmoses are consciously and intentionally transformed. In other words, the sexual function, considered in broad terms, plays a key role in the evolutionary path back to God.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the philosophical outlines of Gurdjieff's psychology of higher Tetartocosmoses, including human beings, in specific regard to their evolutionary potentials.

The Planetary and Higher-Being-Bodies

Gurdjieff presents his conception of human evolution in terms of the way in which "Soul," which is a "higher-being-body" (B:762), is to be created by each Tetartocosmos during her/his lifetime. For Gurdjieff "Soul" is not in-born, but can only be a result of *conscious and intentional* actions by the organism performed during its physical lifetime and beyond. In Gurdjieff's cosmology the possibility for the creation and maintenance of "Souls" is explained by the "Divine idea" of using higher-being-bodies to help God in the maintenance of the universe. The feature of mobility characterizing Tetartocosmoses gave God the idea that these beings, once highly developed, could assist Him in administering the enlarging world:

"And thereupon, when our COMMON FATHER ENDLESSNESS ascertained this automatic moving of theirs, there then arose for the first time in HIM the

Divine Idea of making use of it as a help for HIMSELF in the administration of the enlarging world.” (B:762)

Gurdjieff suggests (B:762–769) that other than the planetary body, there can arise two other bodies, namely, the body-Kesdjan and the Soul, of which the latter is the highest and relatively immortal (relative in terms of the level of objective reason crystallized in it that makes it immortal within different cosmic spheres). Unless conscious and intentional changes are introduced into the planetary body especially during the last procreative phase of the developmental enneagram of the organism in each cycle, the body-Kesdjan would not arise, and thereby upon the occurrence of (first) death, the planetary body of the Tetartocosmos decomposes back to the world of microcosmoses from which it had emerged and becomes recycled into possibly other planetary bodies. However, if the body-Kesdjan is formed, it is possible that another, a third, body, or the Soul, may also be formed within this second-body up to certain level of development during the physical lifetime of the organism. Upon the (first) death of the planetary body, body-Kesdjan, being lighter than the physical body, rises to a higher level of the atmosphere where it can nourish from the cosmic sources from which it primarily feeds—that is, of the rays of the sun and other planets. During this time, the Soul gains a chance to feed off the divine sources in order to develop to such a degree of “objective reason” where, upon the death and inevitable decomposition of the body-Kesdjan itself, it could become free and thus be able to move higher toward its food source in the Sun Absolute where it can aid God in the administration of the universe. In special circumstances where body-Kesdjan decomposes too early for the Soul to attain the required degree of “objective reason,” it becomes necessary for the Soul to transmigrate to other nearby body-Kesdjans in order to gain sufficient time to accomplish its development. In this sense, Gurdjieff dismisses (B:769) the simpler notions of “reincarnation” that assume such transmigrations occur to all beings all the time; such views, for Gurdjieff, are based on the misconception that Souls are in-born at birth in the planetary body and remain on the planetary surface once death occurs.

For Gurdjieff, only certain Tetartocosmoses succeed in developing a second body (Kesdjan), and thus become “two-natured” or simply “beings” (B:764), and even fewer succeed in developing a third body, or Soul, thus becoming “three-natured” (in the sense of acquiring all higher bodies) during their lifetime. Those who do not develop a body-Kesdjan simply die “like a dog” and decompose into the elementary substances that act as “fertilizers” (Peters 1964:42) for the formation of new Tetartocosmoses, paving the way for the possibility of evolution for certain of them.

The evolutionary path of formation of higher-being-bodies, Kesdjan as well as Soul, correspond to the enneagram of involution and evolution as

illustrated previously in Figure 1.5 (see Chapter One). The Tetartocosmic formation as a planetary body has two stages to traverse on its way back to God, the Sun/radiations (point 8), and the Sun Absolute/Word-God (point 9). Body-Kesdjan and the Soul are nourished by substances and radiations emanating from these two higher cosmoses respectively, and their attainments depend on receiving timely nourishment from these sources in the course of planetary body's lifetime and beyond.

The possibility of formation of higher-being-bodies is prefigured in the "three-brained" nature of certain Tetartocosmoses such as human beings. In order to understand how Gurdjieff explains the process of formation of higher-being-bodies in Tetartocosmoses, it is important to explore how he constructs the developmental enneagram of the human organism consuming three different kinds of "foods" as prerequisites for conscious and intentional development of her or his higher-being-bodies. As noted above, the key role that links the threefold food assimilation and brain systems of the human organism on the one hand, and the formation of higher-being-bodies, on the other hand, is assigned to how crystallizations of the sexual part of the physical brain (or center) are consciously and intentionally redigested (or, in Gurdjieff's terminology, "coated") internally by the physical, emotional, and intellectual centers of the body as a whole:

"In every three-brained being in general, irrespective of the place of his arising and the form of his exterior coating, there can be crystallized data for three independent kinds of being-mentation, the totality of the engendered results of which expresses the gradation of his Reason." (B:769)

For Gurdjieff, Reason, in its ideal state, is a totality of results of full development of three independent centers in a Tetartocosmos: higher mental, higher emotional, and higher physical. These represent the results of functioning of Soul, of body-Kesdjan, and of higher workings of the ordinary physical body. Gurdjieff envisages an ideal reproductive practice, associated with "angels, archangels, and most of the Sacred Individuals" (B:772) nearest to God, in which a Tetartocosmos is born with these higher bodies ready-made. In this case, for instance, he envisions (on the planet Modiktheo, in the system of the Protocosmos or Sun Absolute) a Tetartocosmos that exists in triplicity, that is, as three individual sexes, genders, or "conceptions," the Martna, Spirna, and Okina (B:771–73) who—through a unique form of conception and a special independent performance during gestation while conducting conscious and intentional duties of a particular kind on their inner child—reunite and mutually give birth to a fully developed high-reasoned being. This being does not need to perform any conscious or intentional acts to perfect itself, for it is already born perfect. Angels are created angels.

Gurdjieff also envisions another possibility of creatures he calls “Polormedekhtic” or “Monoentithits” (B:770) whose sexes are included in the same individual body.

Humans, however, fall somewhere in between the above two extremes. They are split into two sexes, making each individual a “half-being” (B:771) as far as the procreative function is concerned. While the offspring is born fully developed in the physical center with all the automatic functions in place for the physical continuation of the organism and species, the development of the mental and the emotional centers can only be accomplished through upbringing and education, especially (in case of higher emotional and intellectual centers) through the person’s own “conscious labor and intentional suffering.” The combination of the mechanical physical growth with these two latter functions are the manifested enactments of the three shocks as embedded in the post-creation enneagram (see Figure 1.1). Gurdjieff calls these latter two important requirements for self-perfection (“conscious labor and intentional suffering”), “being-Partkdolg-duty” (B:769–71), a duty that was allegedly prescribed by God and His angels in order to help human beings perfect themselves to the required degree of reason in order to be of use to Him in administering the universe. As we shall see later, this “being-Partkdolg-duty” is what today is referred to as “meditation”—which can (and should) be performed in diverse (and not just sitting) forms amid everyday life.

The splitting of sexes on Earth, Gurdjieff’s version of the Adam and Eve story, is presented in his First Series in the form of a tale about the splitting of the original planet into three fragments Earth, Moon, and a smaller piece Anulios, respectively representing the male, the female, and the homosexual tendencies. “Moon” in Middle Eastern poetry and folk culture is generally associated with the female. Gurdjieff tells us that the splitting of the original planet into three pieces was a result of the collision of a comet called “Kondoor” with the original planetary formation. The purpose of raising this issue—which deserves special consideration later in our examination of Gurdjieff’s theory of the causes of human disharmonization—is that the procreative function in the human Tetartocosmos takes place not in one organism but across two beings or “cosmic concentrations” (i.e., the Earth and the Moon, or male and female). For Gurdjieff, the last stopinder of the Law of Seven in the enneagram represents the procreative or reproductive function of the organism as a whole:

“Thanks for this, the completing process of the Sacred Heptaparaparshinokh for the continuation of the species, for instance, proceeds not through one being, as it proceeded with the Tetartocosmoses, but through two beings of different sexes, called by us ‘Actavus’ and ‘Passavus’ and on the planet Earth, ‘man’ and ‘woman.’” (B:771)

The crystallization "Exioëhary" as previously indicated in Figure 1.6 is Gurdjieff's word for "sperm" or the reproductive elements which he associates both with the male and the female sexual organs.¹

For Gurdjieff (B:774, 780) Tetartocosmoses are primarily parts of the grand Trogoautoegocratic (i.e., post-creation) system spreading across the whole Megalocosmos in order to fulfil the purpose of preserving the integrity of the Sun Absolute. However, as results of the *involutionary* process of microcosmic forces, they also have the *potential*, in certain of them, to achieve higher-being-bodies in order to also fulfil higher tasks in the administration of the universe. In other words, these higher functions potentially available to some evolved Tetartocosmoses are not meant to replace or disturb the original purpose for which the universe was created in the first place. Becoming higher-being-bodied is a privilege, not necessarily a right, in Gurdjieff's cosmology. Only those who consciously and intentionally choose to seek it indefatigably are able to possibly attain it.

The parallel Gurdjieff draws (B:775–80) between Megalocosmos as a whole and the human being as a miniature universe is instructive in understanding his enneagram of human organism and its evolution. As in the Megalocosmos—where he associates the affirming force with the Sun Absolute, the denying force with the second-order-suns, and the reconciling or neutralizing force, which keep the Megalocosmos together, with planetary systems embodying micro- and Tetartocosmoses—Gurdjieff treats the Soul, planetary body, and body-Kesdjan in a perfected Tetartocosmos as affirming, denying, and reconciling forces keeping the organism in balance.

Even regarding the ordinary human organism, rather than just for higher bodies, Gurdjieff holds the parallel to be true. For the universe as a whole, Protocosmos (Sun Absolute) acts as the "head-brain,"² the second-order-suns as brain nodes of the "spinal marrow" located in the spinal column involving the emotional and psychic realm, and the planetary systems composed of relatively evolved micro and Tetartocosmoses as the sensuous nervous system spread throughout the body but chiefly concentrated in the

1. It is interesting to observe that the appearance of this crystallization on that deflection of the zig-zag element of the enneagram which corresponds to the last deflection of the diamond element would have logically required the continuation of the terminological pattern of using numbers to prefix the common postfix -ëhary. Proto-, deftero- (or deutro, two), trito- (three), tetarto- (four), piandjo- (this in Persian means five), follow this pattern of numbering five of the six deflections of the zig-zag element (counting clockwise on the circle), so it would have made sense to call the sixth crystallization "sexioëhary." Gurdjieff apparently dropped the "s" to avoid overt association of this term with sexuality—another of his cryptic maneuvers. The postfix -ëhary, by the way, is a rendering of the term "johary" which in Persian/Azeri-Turkish vocabulary means "essence (or extract) of," or in Gurdjieff's words, "crystallization of."

2. Gurdjieff likens the cells of our brain with the angels and archangels occupying the Protocosmos (B:777–78).

“pit of stomach” or the “solar plexus”³ (or the “complex of the nodes of the sympathetic nervous system” (B:780). Regarding the universal parallels of the three brains in relation to one another, Gurdjieff writes:

“And, finally, just as in the Megalocosmos, all the results obtained by the flow of the fundamental process of the Sacred Heptaparaparshinokh from the ‘affirmation’ of the Most Most Holy Protocosmos and from the various shades of ‘denial’ of the newly created ‘Suns’ began to serve thereafter as a ‘reconciling principle’ for everything newly arising and already existing, so that in them also, there is a corresponding localization for the concentration of all results obtained from the affirmation of the head-brain and from all the shades of denial of the spinal marrow, which results afterwards serve as a regularizing or reconciling principle for the functionings of the whole common presence of each of them.” (B:779)

The Three Being-Foods

The parallel Gurdjieff draws between the Megalocosmos and the human organism is more than a metaphor, however. In his view, there is actual connections between the two in terms of the cosmic substances the human organism needs to feed on and transform in order to meet the requirements of the Trogoautoegocratic system at a required minimum, and, as a possibility, the coating of higher-being-bodies in expectation of return to the Sun Absolute. The linkage is established, in other words, in terms of three “being-foods” the human organism must consume in order to meet the above two aims. These three being-foods are the ordinary food/drink, air, and impressions. Of course, these three foods constitute the ingredient of all the substances human body requires to survive. Without food/drink, air, and impressions, human beings cannot survive. In this sense, as Gurdjieff points out, nature has already adapted itself in such a way that all the three foods are supplied *automatically* (again thanks to the elongated mechanical stopinder between 2 and 4, shocked automatically at point 3) in order to help the survival and the propagation of the species in the service of fulfilling the needs of the Trogoautoegocratic system.

However, a higher level of conscious and intentional consumption of the three “being-foods” is possible that is not performed automatically in nature, and the performance of which provides the resources necessary for the creation of higher-being-bodies in the human organism. Conscious and intentional recycling of results of the sex organs in the higher physical body, of intentional breathing of the radiations and elements reflected back from the Sun and planets as contained in ordinary air, and conscious assimilation of impressions originating from the Protocosmos and God (higher spiritual

3. Gurdjieff suggests (B:779) that originally this third brain was centered as an independent brain in the “breast” area, but later was spread across the whole body.

ideas and impressions), all in conjunction with one another and in definite ways and quantities, are the paths through which the coating of higher-being-bodies in human beings is made possible.

Regarding these higher-being foods, Gurdjieff provides the following formulations; note that the "last stopinder" mentioned in the passage below refers to the last phase of automatic processing of ordinary food in the organism during which the "sperms" are produced. Gurdjieff treats these substances as the elements of the Protocosmos but in the lower scale of the human organism:

"... those substances which, on the path of their returning evolutionary ascent from the sacred 'Ashagiprotoëhary'—i.e., from the last Stopinder of the fundamental Sacred Heptaparaparshinokh toward the Most Most Holy Protocosmos—were transmitted with the aid of their own planet itself into definite higher corresponding surplanetary formations, and enter into them for further transformation as their 'first being-food,' which is their ordinary 'food' and 'drink.'

"But those second-sourced substances which, being obtained from the transformations of their own sun and of all the outer planets of their own solar system and which entered the atmosphere of their planet through the radiations of the latter, enter into them again, just as into us, also for further evolutionary transformation as the 'second being-food,' which is their, as they there say, 'air,' by which they breathe, and these substances in their air just serve for the coating and maintenance of the existence of their 'second being-bodies.'

"And, finally, the first-sourced substances which for them as well as for us, are a third kind of being-food, serve both for the coating and for the perfecting of the higher being-body itself." (B:781)

Gurdjieff insists that in the ordinary physical food there is nothing useful as far as the coating of the higher-being-bodies is concerned:

"Up to this time not one of them has yet even become aware that in this first being-food there are substances necessary almost exclusively only for the maintenance of the existence of their coarse planetary body alone—which is a denying-source—and that this first being-food can give almost nothing for the other higher parts of their presence." (B:782)

Gurdjieff suggests that in order for the proper assimilation of the three being foods to take place to enable the coating of higher-being-bodies, conscious and intentional striving is necessary which itself requires "intentional contemplativeness" (B:783). But, given the "abnormalities established by them [human beings] themselves in the ordinary process of their being-existence" (B:781), human beings are not educated properly to learn the need for and significance of such conscious and intentional

strivings to perfect themselves to the gradation of higher-being-bodies.⁴ As a result, according to Gurdjieff, nature has adapted the conditions such that “unexpected” occurrences in the individual’s life provide such intense inner conflicts that propels the organism, albeit automatically, to perform the tasks which would potentially result to some extent in the coating of higher-being-bodies in her or him. Such inner conflicts, characterized by “active deliberations” and “intense being experiencings” (B:784) automatically engender the conscious labors and intentional sufferings that are required for the proper assimilation of higher cosmic substances or elements contained in ordinary food, air, and impressions:

“Unfortunately Nature there was compelled to adapt herself to this abnormality, so that, owing to these unexpectednesses, certain intense being-experiencings and active deliberations might proceed in them automatically, independently of them themselves and so that, owing to these ‘active deliberations,’ the required transformation and assimilation of these necessary sacred particles of the higher being-foods might automatically proceed in them.” (B:784)

The enneagram of the threefold food assimilation system in the human organism can be derived from the operation of the three octaves of the enneagram as described in Chapter One. The procedure of assimilation of the ordinary food (first being food), air (second being food), and impressions (third being food) consists of three circuits⁵: 1-automatic, 2-conscious, and 3-intentional. Figure 2.1 illustrates the spiral movement of all three circuits, each in turn consisting of three interrelated shocks. Figure 2.2 illustrates in more detail the common process of each circuit. It is in the third circuit that the process of coating of the higher-being-bodies begin to takes place.

The three shocks to the organism in the first circuit are mechanical, and are automatically performed by nature, whereas the three self-shocks to the organism performed in each of the following two circuits are consciously observed and intentionally transforming, respectively. The three octaves of ordinary food, air, and impressions beginning at points 0/9, 3, and 6, represent only the *beginnings* of a lower scale assimilation of planetary (Astroluolucizoin), solar (Polorotheoparl), and divine (protocosmic, or Ansanbaluiazar), sources of foods for the organism. However, only the first, planetary, circuit results in the higher physical product. The other two octaves, left on their own, do not evolve beyond certain moments.

In the first circuit the assimilation of the three foods takes place *automatically*. In the second circuit the organism *consciously observes* and

4. The significance of this oft-repeated phrase throughout the First Series will be discussed later in this book, especially Chapter Four.

5. This term is not in Gurdjieff’s text. I have introduced it for the purpose of clarity of my interpretation of Gurdjieff’s intended meaning.

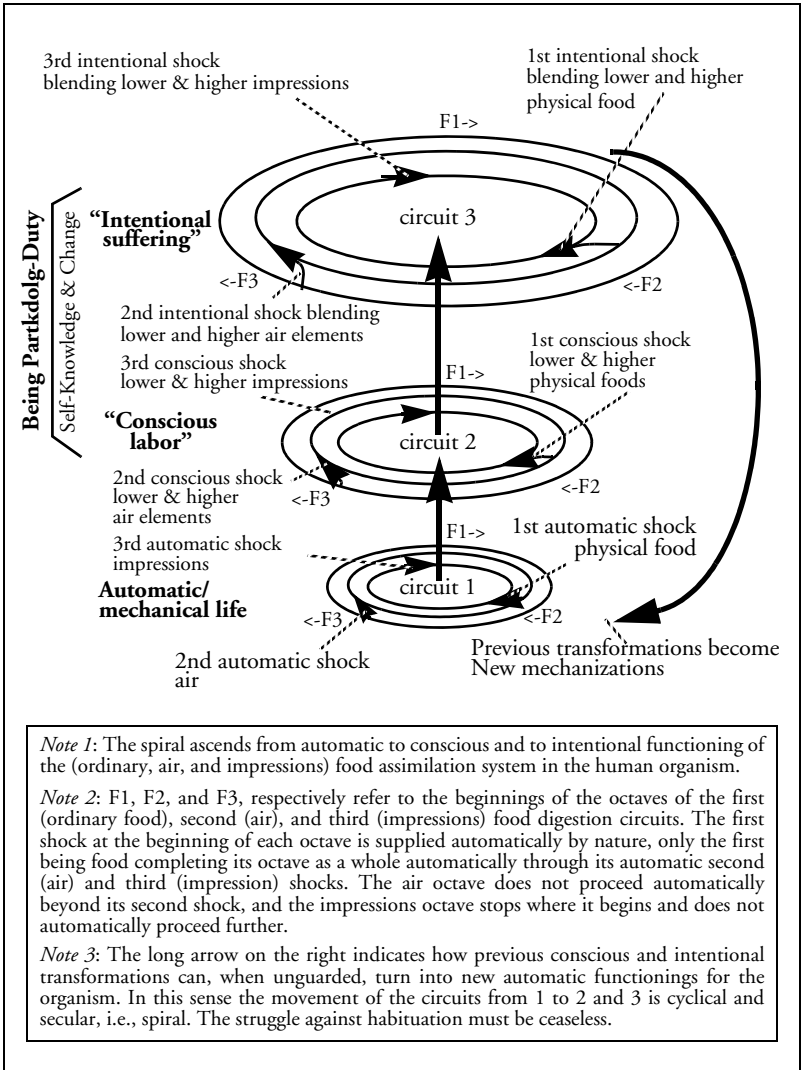


Figure 2.1 The Three Food Circuits in the Human Organism

follows the assimilation process of all the three being foods, without seeking to intentionally change the organism in any way. In the third circuit, however, the organism performs *intentional* self-shocks to the organism in an attempt to transform it in a holistic way. Results of such transformations, however, may become new habits for the organism. Therefore, the threefold

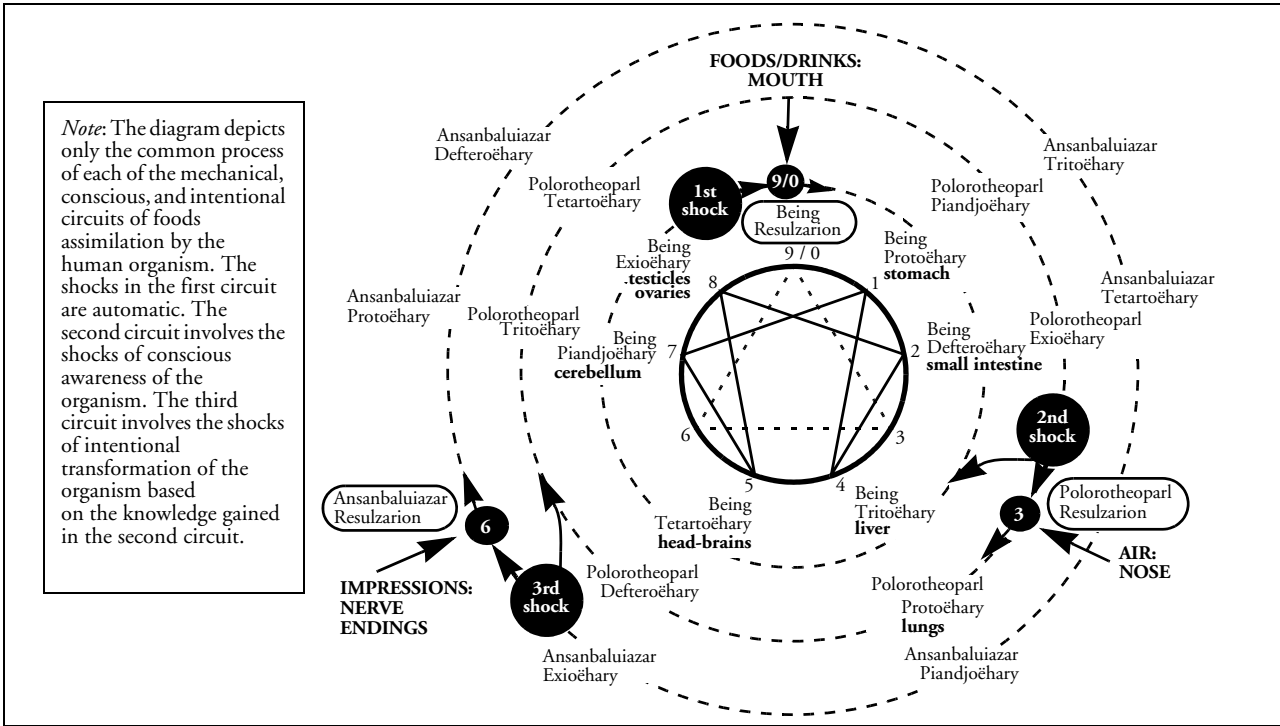


Figure 2.2 The Common Enneagram of Food, Air, and Impression Assimilation Octaves in the Human Organism

circuits must always be renewing so that one's own efforts to transform oneself do not create new automaticities for the organism as a whole.

The assimilation of each food goes through identical processes of producing corresponding intermediary food crystallizations (Protoëhary, Deferoëhary, Tritoëhary, Tetartoëhary, Piandjoëhary, Exioëhary, and Resulzarion) characterized by an external mechanical shock early on (before Tetartoëhary) and a possible intentional shock at the end of each octave for the assimilation of final Exioëhary result of the corresponding octave. The following process of foods assimilation in the human organism is described in the First Series (B:786–95).

In the first automatic circuit that takes place mechanically, a process that automatically serves the maintenance of the Trogoautoegocratic system, ordinary food as the first being food enters the mouth at point 0 (first automatic shock), and follows a digestive tract at points 1 and 2, and its results rest at point 4 without being able to move any further without an external shock. At point 3, the second automatic shock of breathing introduces air as the second being food into the organism, its results aiding the continuation of the assimilation process of the first being food. The air assimilation process itself, however, requires a new external shock, that of impressions, before continuing on with its own assimilation process and, with its aiding the assimilation of the first being food, toward the production of its final result of assimilation of the first being food at point 8 before arriving back at point 0/9. The combination of the assimilations of the ordinary food, air, and (especially sexual) impressions helps produce the most important and highest result of the ordinary food assimilation in the organism, that is the male or female "sperm" at point 8. In other words, the human organism automatically produces the first being food product that instinctively aids the process of species maintenance through procreation.

However, according to Gurdjieff, it is this highest first being food, a result of the first circuit, that is the basis of the possibility of the coating of higher-being-bodies in the human organism. The process of these higher food assimilation processes, however, is not automatic, but can only be attained through conscious and intentional actions by the organism itself. It is the conscious self-shocking and self-transforming procedure of two additional circuits, almost identical to the first but different in that they are consciously and intentionally self-induced, in other words, that can help the process of coating of the higher-being-bodies in the organism.

The second, conscious, circuit of the three food assimilation system involves three conscious shocks. The aim of these for the organism is to become consciously self-aware of the process of ordinary food, air, and impression assimilations (or "digestions") in the organism. Self-conscious observation of assimilation of ordinary food, breathing, and impressions, and generally the activity of the organism as a whole in everyday life,

without any effort to change the organism purposely, is the primary task of these conscious self-shocks. The first conscious choice and shock begins again at the last stopinder of the first being food octave, that is between points 8 and 9. The organism seeks to become conscious of how not only the lower being foods, but also the higher being foods are consumed in the everyday life of the organism. The effort at this point is not to change any habits of the organism, such as introducing any form of abstinence into the assimilation of ordinary food or higher food (sexuality), air, or impressions. The aim is to become self-aware of the organism's activities in these realms.

The second conscious shock to the organism in the second circuit takes place in the same manner and moment in which the second automatic shock took place in the ordinary food assimilation cycle. This second additional conscious shock is applied with respect to the breathing assimilation process. In effect, this conscious shock closes the octave of the air assimilation system which had begun automatically earlier. The organism consciously observes its own breathing and becomes gradually aware of the significance of breathing in harmonizing the organism as a whole. The third conscious shock in the second circuit takes place in the same manner and moment in which the third automatic shock took place in the ordinary food assimilation cycle. This third conscious shock is applied with respect to the impressions assimilation system. The organism becomes conscious of its own impressions throughout and outside (in relation to) the body, including both the receptive and moving aspects of its activity. Again, this last conscious shock of the second circuit helps close the octave of the automatic impression octave that begun in the first circuit.

Importantly, the exercise of conscious awareness of all the three physical, air, and impressions digestions in effect involves a split in the organism between that which is observed and that which observes. The crystallization of an observing self is the primary result of the second conscious circuit. This splitting of the self into one that observes and one that is observed is an essential requirement of the spiritual awakening from the organism's trance and automaticity. The observing self resulting from the observed-observer split represents the conception of the body-Kesdjan formed in the second circuit, and is the seed of the future Soul that will actually begin to be coated in the third circuit. The potential "essence" of the first circuit thus gives birth to the "I" (observing self) representing the germination of the body-Kesdjan in the second circuit, which in turn provides the possibility for the successive "coatings" of the Soul in the third circuit.

The third circuit follows exactly the steps of the previous two circuits, except that in this third circuit, the organism seeks, based on the holistic self-awareness it has now gained about itself and its activities amid everyday life, to intentionally transform in a systematic and conscious way the habituated functions associated with the threefold food assimilation system

still dominating the planetary body. Given the resistance of sedimentations directly confronting the self-conscious body in its efforts to transform the organism, this third circuit involves by its very nature "suffering." But this suffering in the third circuit is intentionally induced. Now the organism is (consciously and) intentionally seeking to transform itself. This third circuit thereby also involves three intentional self-shocks to the organism. Gurdjieff is very secretive about revealing the manner of operation of the third circuit. It may be inferred from his writings in the First Series that the first shock involves a conscious choice of abstaining from releasing the highest assimilation results of the first being food octave, that is of "sperms,"⁶ from the body.⁷ In other words, the first intentional shock to the organism in the third circuit involves sexual abstinence. However, Gurdjieff repeatedly warns (B:795, 806–10) that abstinence per se is not sufficient in the coating of higher-being-bodies. It is certainly a necessary, but by no means a sufficient, condition. In fact, in the absence of additional conditions, abstinence may lead the Exioëhary to "involve" back into its elemental conditions from which it emerged and thereby cause various "illnesses" and "de-perfections" to the organism's previous attainments (B:793):

"At the present time, very many of these 'monasteries' exist there, and these innumerable 'monks' who enter them do indeed strictly abstain from the ejection from themselves in the customary way of the being-Exioëhary or sperm formed in them; but of course, no sensible result at all is ever obtained from this abstinence of theirs, and it is not obtained, because the thought has ceased even to enter the heads of these unfortunate 'contemporary' monks that although it is indeed possible, by means of these substances Exioëhary formed in them, to perfect themselves, yet this can proceed exclusively only if the second and third being-foods are intentionally absorbed and consciously digested in one's presence, and this is possible exclusively only if all the parts of one's presence have been accustomed beforehand consciously to fulfill both sacred being-Partkdolg-duties, that is to fulfill 'conscious labors' and 'intentional sufferings.'" (B:807–8)

In order for the procedure to succeed, therefore, it is necessary to exert two additional intentional self-shocks to the process of further assimilation of this higher first being food digestion result in the organism. The nature of these two additional intentional shocks to the organism in the third circuit, involving breathing and impressions, are not revealed explicitly in

6. The use of the term "sperm" for the highest result of the physical food assimilation circuit may be interpreted as a male-centric bias in Gurdjieff's "system." However, Gurdjieff uses the term generically at times and does not deny equal *possibilities* of self-perfection between male and female human organisms.

7. It is important to note that abstinence does not, for Gurdjieff, preclude procreative activity on the part of the organism. He in fact considers procreation also as a being-duty to guarantee the continuation of the species.

Gurdjieff's text. In the Third Series, when he arrives at the point of elaborating on these breathing (and other) techniques, Gurdjieff breaks off his narrative and leaves the Third Series "unfinished." Whether or not these have been cryptically explained in the First Series itself, though, is an important question, and to this we shall return shortly. The point is that in the third circuit, two additional intentional shocks to the assimilation of air and impressions help transform the organism as a whole in such a way that the Divine Body (or Soul) begins to be crystallized within the body-Kesdjan.

These three intentional shocks of the third circuit give final fruit and result only when the conscious assimilation cycle of the higher food, "sperm," is itself brought back to the point 9/0. With the closing of this third, intentional circuit, the body has experienced the ability not only of having become aware of itself (second circuit), but also of intentionally transforming itself (third circuit). The observing self of the second circuit now has ascended to become a transforming self. Repeated performances of the first, second and third circuits lead to gradual crystallization of a self-consciously and intentionally self-transforming permanent "I."

The ultimate aim of the second, conscious, and the third, intentional, circuits of assimilation of the three foods by the organism is thereby the "coating" of the two higher-being-bodies. The higher being food is coated with self-awareness and self-transforming power. The essential inner "child" is educated to become aware of its self-knowing and self-transforming powers. Following the illustration previously given in Figure 1.5 (see Chapter One), one can observe that the evolutionary path back to God from the higher 'involved' planetary Tetartocosmoses requires two major steps, that of reintegrating with the second-order-suns, and finally with the center of Protocosmos, i.e., Sun Absolute. The "coating" of the planetary body in effect is a metaphoric expression of development of higher bodies corresponding to these two higher realms of cosmic order. Likewise, the food sources the assimilation of which can make such coatings possible are those originating from these two Defterocomic and Protocosmic sources. The conscious and intentional self-shocks to the otherwise automatically or mechanically operating organism serving the Trogoautoegocratic system in effect allow the organism to become self-reliant and self-determining. It involves an experience, at the lower scale of Tetartocosmic being, of the Protocosmic possibility of Autoegocratic existence. It involves an experience of perfection at the lower scale of one's own organism. To be able to reunite with God, one must first become the god⁸ of one's own being.⁹

8. It is interesting to note that in Persian, the word for God is "Khoda" which may be an etymological root of the term "God." "Khod" in Persian means "self," and "Khoda" literally (and simultaneously) means "that which comes from and to itself."

The significance of the enneagram of food assimilation system is more than in pointing out that knowing what you eat and how you breathe has a connection to what you think and do. The notion of "coating" higher-being-bodies wrapped so much in mystical language basically involves "attaching" (or, in Gurdjieff's words, "blending") the efforts made at self-knowledge and self-transformation to the instinctive and habitual functions of the organism. This way conscious labors and intentional sufferings of the organism in knowing and changing itself become as much a second (and third) nature to the organism as the instinctive, moving, and sexual functions. In its religious forms, this practice has taken the form of praying before or after taking food, while inhaling and exhaling air, engaging (or not) in reproductive/sexual activity, or before and after performing any daily tasks, etc. With Gurdjieff, such religious forms are themselves stripped, and their inner essential meanings given rational groundings—although, for other purposes, Gurdjieff then wraps them in other fantastic symbology.

Conscious awareness of and control over the process of eating and breathing has an important influence on how the process of thinking affects and keeps in balance the feeling and instinctive desires of the body. The introduction of the custom of fasting into the meditation practice, or the conscious concentration on breathing, aim to make possible the creation of such inner (and outer) environments for the organism that would enable it to more persistently and effectively contemplate and critically transform the automated structures of all the three centers as a whole. To observe and experience sensations and desires and not react and satisfy them intentionally releases certain results in the body that can gradually "crystallize" into a self-determining and self-willed "I" in oneself. This is especially important in terms of body's sexual function, and in this sense, the observation of sexual desires and intentional abstinence from sex provide the human organism with a "natural" vehicle, through meditative practice, of developing higher selves ("being-bodies") in oneself.

The secret of the so-called "alchemy," therefore, may lie not in what one *does* with sexual products of the body, but with what one *does not do* with them. But it is also important to consider the "totality" of octaves that contribute to the processing—both consumption and production—of the three "foods" of the human organism. For instance, the sexual desire and function can be initiated not simply from the physical center, but from the emotional and mental centers as well. And for the processing of it, all the

9. Gurdjieff calls the two higher being foods that feed the Kesdjan and Soul/Divine Bodies, Askokin and Abrustdonis. The difference here involves the distinction between knowing versus understanding/being. Body-Kesdjan knows, but the Divine Body understands. One is pure air, the other is crystallized in permanence. The difference is that between knowing/wishing to be something, and being it.

three centers participate. The key to the “alchemy” of human development is the ability to avoid/prevent the fixation/identification of the “attention” and functioning of the organism on/to any of the “centers of gravity” of the developmental process. Sexuality provides the individual with an automatically initiated impulse challenging which, in a conscious and intentional manner, motivates the organism to develop self-willed and self-determining qualities. It is this ability of conscious and intentional dehabitation beyond all forms of fixation that allows the all-round free developmental of human individuality.

To reiterate, based on the conscious awareness gained about the holistic operation of the automated and habituated body as a whole, the preservation of the higher planetary body produced automatically by the Trogoautoegocratic system in the first circuit is blended with conscious and intentional transformations in the second and third being food “digestions” in order to enable the crystallizations of the higher physical body and the other two higher-being-bodies, body-Kesdjan and Soul. By calling the process of the ascendance from the first to second and third circuit “spiral” (see Figure 2.1) I mean to suggest that in Gurdjieff’s view the process is not a once and for all three-staged process, but it is a continually repeating and never-ending process. The results of intentional transformations introduced in the third circuit, if left unattended may become new automaticities, requiring new efforts to gain self-conscious awareness of them, requiring new (re)transformative efforts and sufferings. One can say that the end results of the evolutionary process enacted through the threefold circuits is not to create new automaticities in body, mind, and emotions, but to create a free, unautomated, unattached, mutable, and flexible body (Soul) and permanent “I.” This is why Gurdjieff, in his life, writing, exercises, dances, and ‘movements’ always introduced new changes even in things he had himself introduced before. The struggle against habituation and awakenings from ever newer forms and modes of sleep are perpetual and never-ending.

Gurdjieff suggests that while originally the “Souls” evolved on Earth joined Protocosmos directly to help God in administering the universe, due to a certain misfortune (which Gurdjieff elsewhere associates with the fact of believing in the objective existence of a “good” and “evil” in the universe), the gradations of objective reason of these Souls do not any longer exactly correspond to the vibrations of the Protocosmos and the Sun Absolute, and for this reason they need to remain temporarily in the planet Purgatory to cleanse and purify themselves further before union with God. This planet existing solely by itself is outwardly the most beautiful of all planets, but inwardly the Souls living on them experience untold “remorse-of-conscience” as they have seen the glory of God but cannot yet join His forces. Gurdjieff associates in his tales the roots of the unfounded notions of heaven and hell to the misinterpretation of the role played by Purgatory in

the transition phase of Souls' evolution toward God. There is no "hell" except the inner anguish of those Souls in an otherwise heavenly planet Purgatory. The only "hell" that may be considered to exist is the involutory path of mechanical enslavement and the resulting evil of violence among those organisms not able to achieve their higher-being-bodies (see the previous discussion of good and evil in Chapter One).

Being-Partkdolg-duty

As it is evident from above, the key factor that makes the higher being foods assimilation system possible is the conscious labors and intentional sufferings that are exerted beyond the automatic functioning of the physical organism. As noted earlier, Gurdjieff calls the combination of these two additional circuits of self-shocks to the body, "being-Partkdolg-duty." On the ascending path beyond mere automatic living, it is the conscious and intentional endurance of the inner conflict between the affirming higher-being-body, that is, Soul, and the denying force of the lower planetary body that is key to the success of the process. And in this conflict, the second being body, that is body-Kesdjan, nourishing on the higher elements of the air food, plays an important neutralizing or reconciling role.

According to Gurdjieff only through the introduction of the "foreign help" (B:792), that is "being-Partkdolg-duty," can the organism fulfill the means necessary to develop itself to the higher point of being able to help God in "ruling" and "administering" the enlarging world (B:792). In his view, being-Partkdolg-duty is the alchemical secret of development of higher-being-bodies in Tetartocosmoses. With this consciously and intentionally performed procedure, which in more ordinary language may be simply called performing the duty to know and change oneself, and for which what we know as "meditation" in its various forms plays the key part, the Tetartocosmos succeeds in uniting the functioning of its "three brains" into a singular unified living system to become an "individual." Being-Partkdolg-duty is the alchemical procedure of consciously and intentionally reunifying the three "parts" of the organism into an immortal whole, as expressed metaphorically by the metal gold. The term "being-Partkdolg-duty" may have been itself cryptically constructed by Gurdjieff by the letters of the words "part" and of gold ("dolg"). It refers to the duty inherent in Tetartocosmic beings to transform their threefold "parts" into unified immortal beings in order to make possible communion with the source of all creation. This is the process where a perishable organism that could simply "die like a dog" becomes immortal like gold.

It is through taking up such a twofold conscious and intentional task as their "being-Partkdolg-duty" that higher Tetartocosmoses such as those on the Planet Earth can have a chance to awaken to their mechanicalness and asleep, and strive to become human in the image of their Creator.

Chapter Three **PHILOSOPHY: EPISTEMOLOGY OF “THREE-BRAINED BEINGS”**

Even that idea, “absurd” for all contemporary scientists, that there proceed in man simultaneously three associations of independent nature, did not surprise me, and I accepted it with a feeling of great respect for the knowledge of ancient people....

And it did not surprise me because previously, at the time of my special verifications of what seemingly pertains to the psyche of man, carried out with the aid of all sorts of experimental means attained by contemporary civilization, chiefly by means of the science of “hypnotism,” I noted and firmly established that there follow simultaneously in man three kinds of associations—of thought, of feeling and of mechanical instinct....

These three kinds of associations in one man explain that peculiar sensation, noticed at times by everyone, as though there were several beings living in him....

—L:149

The threefold nature of octaves in each of the three food circuits, as described in Chapter Two, is rooted in the “three-brained” nature of the more highly developed Tetartocosmoses, i.e., human beings. In the ascending circuits, the organism experiences (automatically, consciously, and intentionally) the threefold nature of her or his being. The

Trogoautoeocratic system does not *require* the unification of these three brains. *In fact, its automatic operation requires their almost separate and independent functioning.* Gurdjieff identifies these three "centers" of the human organism as the physical, the intellectual, and the emotional centers. They feed respectively on the three, physical, impressions, and air being-foods supplied by the organism's environment.

The Three Totalities of Functionings

In the Third Series, Gurdjieff presents an "ancient" formulation of the three-centered nature of the human organism (L:144, 147). Given its seemingly high significance for Gurdjieff, I will reproduce and then closely examine the whole of this text below:

The general psyche of every man on reaching maturity, which begins on an average in the male sex at twenty years and in the female sex at the beginning of the thirteenth year, consists of three totalities of functioning which have almost nothing in common with each other.

The course of action of all three of these independent totalities of functioning in the common presence of a man who has attained maturity takes place simultaneously and incessantly.

All the factors making up and producing these three totalities of functioning begin, and cease, to form in man at different period of his life.

The factors producing in man the first totality of functioning, unless special measures are employed, are formed, as has been established long ago, only in childhood—in boys on an average until the age of eleven years, and in girls until the age of seven.

The factors producing the second totality of functioning begin to form in boys from the age of nine years, and in girls even from the age of four years, lasting in different cases a different length of time, approximately until the attainment of maturity.

And factors producing the third totality begin to form from the attainment of maturity, continuing in the average man at present only until the age of sixty, and in woman only until the age of forty-five.

But in the case of people who have consciously perfected themselves to the so-called "all-centers-awake state," that is, to the state of being able in their waking state to think and feel on their own initiative, these factors still continue to form in man until the age of three hundred years and in woman until the age of two hundred.

The forming of all the factors for the functionings of these three entirely separate totalities of functioning proceeds in people in accordance also with the universal law of "threefoldness."

For the formation of factors of the first totality, there serve as the “anode beginning,” on the one hand, all kinds of involuntarily perceived outer impressions and, on the other hand, impressions resulting from so-called “all-centered dozing”; and as the “cathode beginning” there serve the results of reflexes of the organism, chiefly of those organs having an hereditary particularity.

For the formation of the factors of the second totality, there serve as the “anode beginning” outer impressions taken in under a certain pressure and having thereby the character of being intentionally implanted from outside, and as the “cathode beginning” the results of the functioning of factors formed from impressions of a similar kind previously perceived.

The factors of the third totality of functioning are formed from the results of “contemplation,” that is, from results received from the “voluntary contacts” of the factors of the first two totalities, for which moreover the results of the second totality serve as the “anode beginning” and the results of the first totality as the “cathode.”

One of the properties of such an actualization of all three separate totalities of functionings producing the general psyche of man is that which, by combinations of the “voluntary contact” of the actions of these three independent totalities of functioning, causes to proceed in one of them the imprintation of those processes proceeding in the other totalities, as well as those proceeding outside of the given man which happen to fall into the sphere of the subjective action of his organs of perception.

The part of this property found in the common presence of man, ordinarily perceived by people, is that which is called “attention.”

The degree of sensitivity of the manifestation of this property or, as otherwise defined by ancient science, “the strength of embrace” of this “attention” depends entirely upon the so-called “gradation of the total state” of a given man.

For the definition of this property in man, which is called “attention,” there is, by the way, found also in ancient science the following verbal formulation:

“THE DEGREE OF BLENDING OF THAT WHICH IS THE SAME IN THE IMPULSES OF OBSERVATION AND CONSTATATIONS IN ONE TOTALITY’S PROCESSES WITH THAT OCCURRING IN OTHER TOTALITIES.”

This above mentioned “gradation of the total state” of man extends, as science formulates it, from the strongest subjective intensity of “self-sensation” to the greatest established “self-losing.”

That totality always becomes the initiating factor for the realization of a common function of the three separate totalities which represents the

general psyche of man in which at the given moment this "gradation of the total state" has its center of gravity. (L:145–47)

Having presented this "ancient" formulation, and intrigued by the text capitalized above (as is in the original) and especially the phrase "THAT WHICH IS THE SAME," Gurdjieff proceeds to provide his "own" formulation of the subject matter of the text, while emphatically referring the reader back to the chapter "The Holy Planet Purgatory" in his First Series—which I closely examined in Chapter One when introducing the two primordial laws and the story of creation. Gurdjieff's own formulation/interpretation is as follows:

What is "sameness"? Why "sameness"? For what purpose this peculiar "sameness"?

Even that idea, "absurd" for all contemporary scientists, that there proceed in man simultaneously three associations of independent nature, did not surprise me, and I accepted it with a feeling of great respect for the knowledge of ancient people.

And it did not surprise me because previously, at the time of my special verifications of what seemingly pertains to the psyche of man, carried out with the aid of all sorts of experimental means attained by contemporary civilization, chiefly by means of the science of "hypnotism," I noted and firmly established that there follow simultaneously in man three kinds of associations—of thought, of feeling and of mechanical instinct.

Most important of all is that not only do the three kinds of independent associations flow simultaneously, but also there participate in all of them the results of the three sources found in man for the transformation of the three natures of so-called "cosmic vivifyingness."

These sources are located in man as follows: the first, in a part of the brain; the second, in a part of the spinal column; and the third, in a part of the solar plexus.

These three kinds of associations in one man explain that peculiar sensation, noticed at times by everyone, as though there were several beings living in him. Those who wish to acquaint themselves more fully with these questions are advised to learn, that is, not simply to read but to immerse themselves in, that chapter of the First Series of my writings entitles "The Holy Planet Purgatory." (L:149)

The issues being raised and discussed in the above texts seem to be for Gurdjieff and his teaching of *singular significance* such that in the immediate text following them he refers to that point in the exposition of his narrative as "the most serious moments of my writings" (L:149). Given this observation, it is important that we examine the above texts *very carefully*.

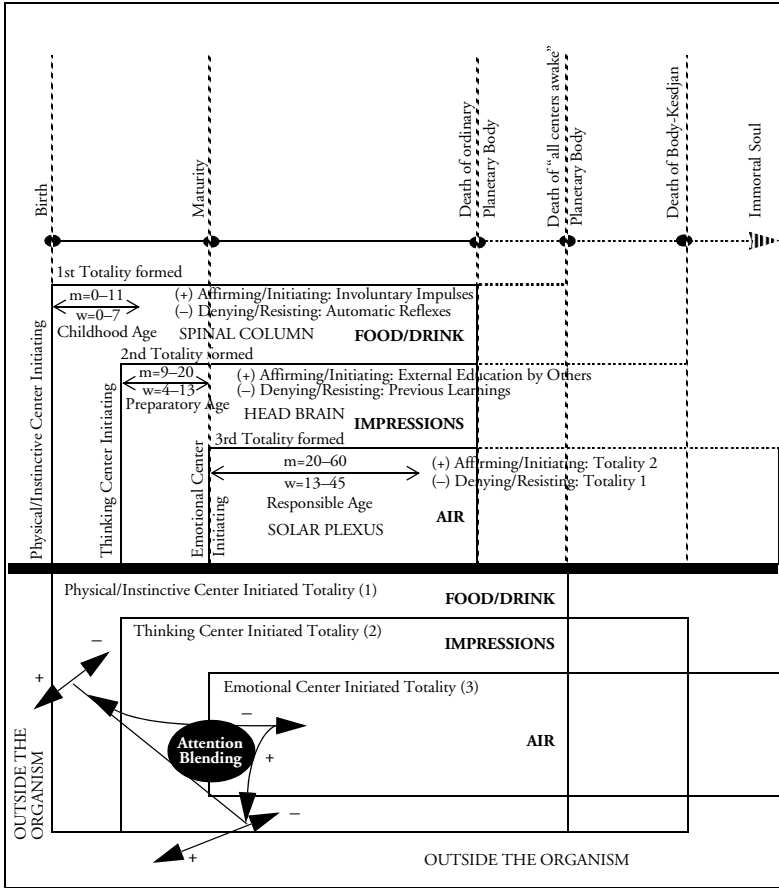


Figure 3.1 Diagrammatic Representation of Gurdjieff's Conception of the Three Totalities Comprising the Human Organism

Figure 3.1 illustrates both Gurdjieff's formulations of the nature of human psyche as quoted above, in light of the previous exposition on the nature of higher bodies. The overall consideration is that the human organism during its lifetime splits into three almost independent and separate totalities of functionings which—depending on the initiating factor in each—can be called the mechanical/instinctive, thinking, and emotional/feeling centers. Notice that Gurdjieff uses the term totality in the sense that the three must not be conceived as actually separate parts of the body, but that each center itself constitutes a totality of physical, thinking, and feeling aspects, one of which is the dominant aspect in the given totality. For example, the thinking center does not operate in the absence of

a physical organ, and the emotional center involves conflicts between thinking and physical centers. The difference across the three totalities depends on which aspect is the initiating force in each totality. The three totalities in these formulations can be associated with the three circuits presented previously in Figure 2.1 (see Chapter Two). In each circuit, all the three centers participate. It is the initiating and the dominant center in each circuit or totality that is considered by Gurdjieff to be the defining or the determining node of each totality. In circuit or totality 1, for instance, the mechanical (or instinctive) is the initiating factor. In circuit or totality 2, that associated with "conscious labor," the thinking center is dominant and initiating. And in circuit or totality 3, that associated with "intentional suffering," the emotional center takes initiative.

According to Gurdjieff's "ancient" formulation, the three totalities complete their formations during the organism's lifetime at different periods, which are different for men and women. First the totality or circuit 1 is established, its formation being completed by the time the organism can automatically produce the highest product of ordinary physical food—that is upon the completion of the sexual organs and their functioning. The second circuit or totality is established next through customary education. Throughout this education period, the organism is not still responsible for itself. It is still subjected to the outside influences of elders who consciously seek to educate the organism. The third totality or circuit begins latest, when the organism becomes "responsible" and "mature" in the sense that it is now capable of applying its own knowledge to take care of itself intentionally. Only "householders" who have achieved a certain degree of self-sufficiency can adequately embark on this final circuit. Of course, for Gurdjieff, how far the organism in the ordinary life achieves this is generally questionable, and it is for this reason that he contrast the ordinary lifetime of the organism with an "all-centers-awake" and relatively more perfected state in which the organism is actually in charge of its own thinking and feeling functions. This also points to Gurdjieff's belief that in ordinary conditions of life, the human organism is for all practical purposes lacking a "Soul" and asleep to what it should be in an alternative "all-centers-awake" state. The organism may still think and seek to change itself in the ordinary life, or may become aware of the aim and sense of her or his being on a cosmic scale and consciously and intentionally develop the three totalities of functioning available to him or her for the coating of higher-being-bodies.

By contrasting the "ancient" with his own formulations, Gurdjieff is encouraging the reader to come to an integral appreciation of the threefoldness of the brain systems of the human organism on the one hand, and the totality of their functioning in actual everyday life, on the other. Making a distinction among the circuits or totalities of "bodies," constituted of all the three centers but distinguished from one another by the center taking the

initiative, is an important task of the Third Series of his writings. It is also the consideration of these “totalities” that enables Gurdjieff to suggest in passing (as quoted above) the *central defining doctrine* of his teaching: namely that the so-called “individual” man in ordinary life is actually not a singular being but by its organic constitution as given in nature is born a multiplicity “as though there were several beings living in him” (L:149).

Observing the nature of the three totalities as described above, one should note that the feeling-center-initiated totality plays a mediating role between the intellectual-center-initiated and the physical/instinctive-center-initiated totalities. The fact that often in his text the order of presentations follows the particular sequence of physical, feeling, and thinking, should not be interpreted as if it is the intellectual totality alone that is the mediating force. As far as the emotional center itself is concerned, the defining feature of this totality is that of its being a mediating totality between the thinking and the physical/instinctive totalities, in which, according to Gurdjieff, the thinking center constitutes the higher affirming force, while the physical totality constitutes the lower denying factor.

A central and important consideration for Gurdjieff in comparing the two formulations seems to be the definition and function of “attention” in the human organism. It is clear that attention is the medium through which the results of the three totalities can be blended with one another; For Gurdjieff, the fact that the three totalities, despite their independent and separate functionings, involve “the same” material, and can imprint one another, is of *utmost significance*. It is this common denominator of the three centers, in fact, that allows them to become reintegrated as a singular whole as the organism consciously and intentionally seeks to perfect itself. Besides, “hypnotism,” to which Gurdjieff alludes in passing in his text, is made possible *because* of both the separability and the translatability of the physical, thinking and (mediating) emotional functionings through the meditative role played by attention (or lack thereof). Finally, it is also important to note that in his second formulation above, Gurdjieff also makes a reference again to the relation between the three centers and the three “cosmic” food assimilation systems that he had already described in the First Series (presented in Chapter Two):

Most important of all is that not only do the three kinds of independent associations flow simultaneously, but also there participate in all of them the results of the three sources found in man for the transformation of the three natures of so-called “cosmic vivifyingness.” (L:148)

It was in regard to these food sources that Gurdjieff had already indicated in the First Series (B:779) that in the conflict between the first (ordinary) and third (impressions) food assimilation systems, it was the second (air) assimilation system that played the mediating and regulating role.

The comparison made above between the "totality" formulation and the circuit formulation previously discussed (see Figure 2.1 in Chapter Two) is not to suggest that they are the same. In fact, they are different, and this difference is what Gurdjieff's whole philosophical system intends to reveal. He intends to show that as given by nature, the three centers and totalities in the human organism as a "three-brained being" operate almost separately and independently of one another. The human body, thoughts, and feelings, in other words, have lives and consciousnesses of their own. They rarely "blend" into one another consciously and intentionally for the purpose of the organism's self-knowledge and self-transformation. The purpose of the circuit formulation, central to which is the premise of "conscious labors and intentional sufferings" (being-Partkdolg-duty), is to suggest that the three sides of the human organism *can and need to be* consciously and intentionally blended into one another in the course of a lifetime of efforts at self-knowledge and self-transformation in order to understand the aim and sense of the purpose of human life on Earth, and pave the way for creating new life forms within the organism so as to withstand physical death in favor of immortal union with God.

The "totality" formulation expresses the *involutionary* conditions of the mechanical humanity; the circuit formulation expresses the conditions for humanity's further *evolution*. It is the part in the "totality" formulation discussing the possibility of the three totalities "blending" into one another and imprinting one another through *attention* that provides the link between the human condition *as is*, and the human condition as it *could be*.

The overall significance of the above formulations offered by Gurdjieff is that they establish a direct link between his philosophy and his more well-known theory of the "harmonious development of man." Before presenting the latter, in the next chapter, however, it is necessary to further elaborate on the epistemological apparatus of three-brained beings which also sheds light on the method Gurdjieff adopts in expounding his world-view throughout his writings.

Epistemology of Three-Brained Beings

Under the topic of epistemology, several important aspects of Gurdjieff's belief system can be examined. This includes his theory of knowledge (including his notions of threefold human consciousness, being, conscience, and truth, among others), his conception of education, his views on language, and his research, pedagogical, and writing methodologies. Considerations such as human wakefulness and sleep, of mechanicalness, of inner slavery, and of hypnosis are intricately embedded in the overall framework of Gurdjieff's epistemology. For this reason, all of the issues raised above need to be addressed to gain an adequate appreciation of Gurdjieff's teaching as a whole. However, before elaborating on them, it is

important to recognize the manner in which Gurdjieff's epistemology, psychology, and ontology are closely interrelated.

Gurdjieff's epistemology is directly derived from his ontological and psychological apparatuses. His mythological distinction between the Autoegocratic (pre-creation) and Trogoautoegocratic (post-creation) systems of universal maintenance illustrates in an exaggerated and abstract way the difference between how things should be and how things are. In reference to human beings, this means the difference between an actual state of automatic and mechanical dependence on the "outside" (environment), and an ideal state of conscious and intentional self-maintenance and self-creativity. It signifies the difference between the mechanical state of being and a state of conscious and intentional (in Gurdjieff's words, "all-centers-awake") existence. The post-creation system is a mechanical system that has nevertheless a built-in potential to create relatively Autoegocratic (self-perpetuating) minisystems as blueprints of God at their own lower scales. And this potential can only be utilized through conscious and intentional efforts at self-knowledge and self-transformation on the part of the lower scale Tetartocosmoses (such as humans) who seek self-perfection. For this reason, an adequate understanding of Gurdjieff's psychology and ontology also necessitates an understanding of his epistemology, since the latter is in fact a specific part of the former two as successively broader wholes.

The possibility of arising of consciousness in the universe is itself predicted by Gurdjieff's ontological apparatus of two fundamental laws: the Laws of Seven and Three. These laws were described in detail in Chapter One. For our purposes here, it is important to consider that it is the notion of changes in the seventh (last) stopinder and the subsequent transformation of the fifth stopinder that constitutes the ontological foundation of three-brained beings' epistemology and Gurdjieff's own epistemological perspective and method.

All phenomena, from the Megalocosmos as a whole to the smallest subatomic particles, are subjected to the two laws represented by the enneagram. For Gurdjieff, the enneagram reveals the nature of involution (from the Creator to humankind), and evolution (from humankind to Creator) along a specific ray of creation on which human destiny has been based. The significance for Gurdjieff of the use of the enneagram to shed light on the cosmological structure of the universe is that it explains both the necessity and the causes of emergence of organic life, and later humanity, on Earth. Taking the particular ray of creation between the Creator at one end, and the Earth on the other end, Gurdjieff suggests that while the first external shock was introduced by the Creator Himself, the second external shock could only be exerted indirectly (i.e., "mechanically") through the operation of "objective laws" mediating the Word-God, resulting in the emergence and involution of organic life on Earth. The

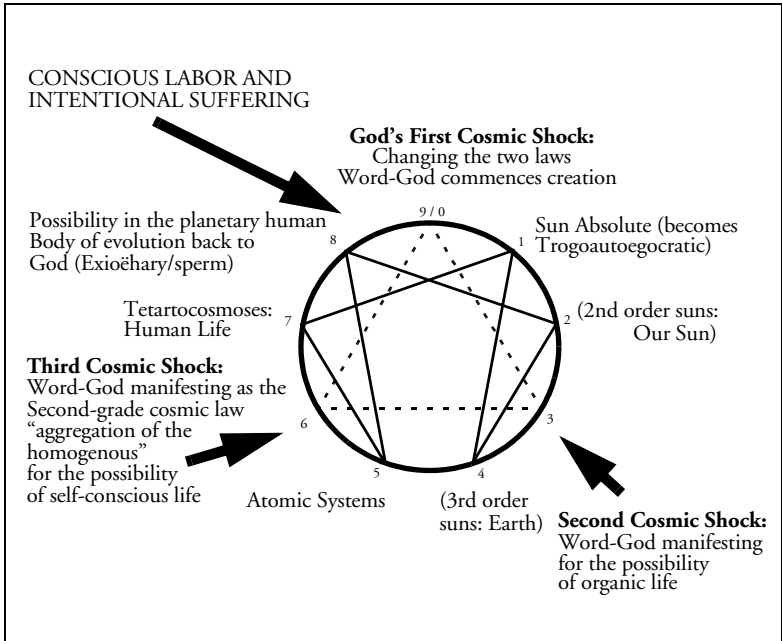


Figure 3.2 Gurdjieff's Conception of the Possibility of Self-Conscious Human Existence as Built into the Fundamental Outer Enneagram of World Creation and Maintenance

organic life on Earth, in other words, is the second mechanical shock along our ray of creation. This for Gurdjieff is of paramount significance since it provides an answer to the “cardinal question” of his life: what is the real significance and purpose of the organic life on Earth? “Why am I here?”

Humanity, as the highest stage of mechanical involution of organic life on Earth, is a result of a further, third, mechanical shock in the outer (or the fundamental cosmic) octave of creation (see Figure 3.2, points 6 and 7). Humanity, as is, represents a mechanical apparatus that unconsciously plays an automatic role in the grand cosmic Trogoautoegocratic process. However, the mechanical involution of humanity has within itself the seed of further conscious and intentional evolution back to God. Humankind is not only itself a product of the second grand cosmic mechanical shock (organic life, at point 3) along the particular Center-Earth ray of creation, but also the agency through whose “conscious labor and intentional suffering” the first conscious cosmic shock could be applied (by itself, to itself, point 8) to further the harmonious cycle of operation of the universe along this particular ray of creation—a process in which the return journey

of humanity toward the Center to reconcile with the Creator takes place. The relationship of the human being to God on a cosmic scale is the same as the relationship of the “sperm” to the human organism at the scale of Tetartocosmos. As above, so below.

In Gurdjieff’s cosmological theater, humanity is not the center of the universe, but in fact is located in one of the remotest corners of the universe, a corner in which the Creator does not, cannot (and in fact, for the purpose of self-evolutionary requirements of human beings, must not) have any direct influence over the human destiny. The Creator exerts His influence over human life indirectly through those human beings more “evolved” along the path of return to God. This renders humanity solely responsible for its consciousness and actions, to become self-conscious of its cosmic mission and to make the necessary efforts to preserve the life of her/his home planet and to return to the Center in order to perform its share and duty in maintaining the harmonious balance of the universe.

Gurdjieff’s cosmic ontology, therefore, necessarily brings up the question of humanity’s place in the universe, and above all the role and meaning of human consciousness as the most distinguishing and defining feature of the species. For this reason, the epistemological question of the nature and development of human consciousness also occupies a central place in Gurdjieff’s philosophical apparatus.

What is it that makes the human organism, despite having developed capacities for instinctive, intellectual, and emotional intelligence, still an automatic and mechanical apparatus, unconsciously serving the requirements of the cosmic Trogoautoegocratic system? Understanding the answer to this question provides the key to Gurdjieff’s epistemology.

Gurdjieff’s answer to this central question is that it is the naturally conditioned separate and independent functionings of the three “totalities” of consciousnesses inherent in the human organism that makes the organism still an unconscious apparatus, serving the “blind” forces of nature (including human society). Human organism is not born, in other words, with an inherent actual and ready-made ability to blend the intelligences associated with the physical, intellectual, and emotional centers, namely the instinctive unconscious, waking conscious, and subconscious realms of the psyche. These realms are given and function on their own as separate and independent domains within the organism. However, the three independent realms of human consciousness are not really different, for they are really made up of one and the same matter: *attention*.

Attention is a material force for Gurdjieff. His epistemology is, like its ontological and psychological premises, consistently materialist. Human consciousness is absolutely material in nature, which can in fact be “weighed and measured.” Gurdjieff refuses to portray human species’ uniqueness in terms solely of his “intellectual” capability. On the contrary, for Gurdjieff

the human organism *as a whole* is the embodiment of consciousness, and is constituted of not one but three brains, making humans "three-brained beings." Human consciousness, in its perfect state, can be a unity of body, mind, and feeling, whose functioning can be consciously and intentionally blended with one another at will by the organism. However, in its naturally given state, this three-brained system is constituted around three distinct and separately functioning brain centers throughout the human body: i.e., the physical (instinctive¹), the intellectual, and the emotional. For Gurdjieff, human conceptual or intellectual knowledge only constitutes only one, and by no means a sufficient, aspect of human consciousness.

Human "knowledge" can truly become "understanding" (B:1166) when it penetrates and becomes one, through practical activity, with the realities of physical and emotional being of the human individual under consideration. Gurdjieff expresses the effort that can bring this about in terms of the need for conscious labor and intentional suffering. Through performing this lifelong "duty," the organism is supposed to mold her or his otherwise separately and independently developing centers into a singular whole by allowing them to consciously and intentionally communicate and "blend" into (imprint) one another. The possibility of this blending is predicated by what Gurdjieff expresses as "what is the same" in the three totalities constituting the human psyche, as all are different forms of "matter": attention. The blending of these realms of human consciousness through attention, in terms of the proper internalization and harmonization of the physical and intellectual awarenesses through the neutralizing and balancing medium of emotional energy produces the highest form of consciousness the human organism can possess: real or objective *conscience*.

For Gurdjieff *conscience* is the ultimate form of conscious energy that should be governing the human organism as a whole. It is for this reason that Gurdjieff, in the First Series, and elsewhere in his writings (as we shall see), sets forth the thesis that it is in fact the human subconscious mind, which is the seat of the entombed human *conscience*, that is the real consciousness governing the individual in everyday life. The possibility of *conscience* is built in the human organism at birth. However, it is an "essence" that needs to be cultivated and consciously and intentionally nourished in the course of the individual's lifetime, first by her or his surrounding environment, and ultimately and especially by her/himself. Human *conscience*, a blending of all human consciousnesses as mediated through the emotional center, must be resurrected and consciously developed through proper education and self-education in order to function

1. In his more detailed elaborations, Gurdjieff divides the physical center into three (instinctive, moving, and sexual), and each of the other two intellectual and emotional centers into two (lower and higher) parts.

as *the* consciousness that is proper to the human organism's real master, her or his own real "I."

The triadic consciousnesses of the human body, mind, and feelings represent the manifestation of the Law of Three on the scale of human organism. For Gurdjieff, human organism resembles a three-storey factory whose normal functioning requires the harmonious operation of its three physical, intellectual and emotional brain centers that can consciously and intentionally communicate with and imprint one another. And for such a harmonious functioning, the higher elements in three kinds of "fuel" or "food" must be assimilated: physical food for the operation of the physical center, impressions for the operation of the intellectual center, and air for the operation of the emotional center. The utilization of the three higher foods by the human organism for the purpose of creation of higher-being-bodies in her/him requires the application of conscious labors and intentional sufferings by the individual her/himself.

Gurdjieff draws upon another analogy (introduced before) between the normal human organism characterized as a carriage, tied to a horse, with a driver, and a master sitting in the box. The carriage itself symbolizes the body, the horse the emotions, the driver, the mind, and the master, the individual as a whole, the indivisible "I." For normal and efficient operation of the carriage, the carriage must be well-maintained and greased periodically at appropriate times, the horse needs to be groomed and fed its particular food at appropriate times, and the driver well-fed, trained, and kept awake at appropriate times. But most importantly, there should be a master present to give directions so the carriage/horse/driver system would operate in unison as the master sees fit to follow her/his will. Each of the three parts of the vehicle, however, can be directed using their own particular language: shafts for the carriage, harnesses for the horse, and language for the driver. The master should know all the three languages, know the needs of each vehicle part, feed them appropriately, give conscious orders at appropriate moments to them, and only then the organism can perform the tasks that it was constructed to perform; only then it can "do." When such a harmonious unity is present in the human organism, one can argue that there in fact is an "individual," an "I," present which is the master of the organism as a whole. Only then can one expect the real "objective reason" be produced as the ultimate product of the three-storey factory. For a truly "individual" human being, a unitary being whose threefold brains work harmoniously in concert with one another, the realms of the unconscious/instinct (domain of instinctive bodily functions), waking consciousness (domain of intellectual knowledge), and subconscious (domain of feelings and emotions) are intricately connected with and aware of one another and are all under the willful control of the human individual, the rightful passenger of the carriage.

What would be the result of existence of such a truly "individual" human being who in fact can proclaim "I am" (not "we are," as unconnected multiplicities of separately functioning selves or personalities²) and can really "do"?

The result would be, first of all, that it would enjoy greater personal health and longevity because it can willfully protect her or his organism from harmful physical, mental, or emotional influences from outside (and inside) the organism. This would lead to the organism's reaching the peak of its biological clock in terms of mortality, living much longer and healthier than it would otherwise be. The endurance of the physical body, of course, is significant for Gurdjieff especially for spiritual reasons, as it would allow more time for the higher-being-bodies to be cultivated in the body before the first, physical, death.

Secondly, and more importantly, this would make the master of the house consciously aware of the limits of its own life, the possibility and inevitability of its own eventual physical death at any single moment of its daily existence, which would render futile all attachments to and identifications with things outside itself, of holding any "property" in anything. What would be the use of gathering and accumulating anything, and spending lots of time at such an effort, when obviously the end of all is physical death for the organism? This would in turn make the individual curious about the overall meaning and purpose of life and the humanity's place in it in general—which would sooner or later lead it to become conscious of its cosmic mission in the universal theater of the Creator's immortality, a scheme that would make the individual aware of its own power and potentials because, after all, it is made up and constructed from the very same material as the Creator Himself.

Thirdly, and most importantly, however, the unitary consciousness of the truly human individual would make one aware of one's own functions as a member of human society as a whole, making one aware of the necessity of preservation and welfare of others like oneself in society, making one treat others with respect, who would be tolerant of their weaknesses and would help them in becoming masters of themselves, rather than making them one's own slaves. It would produce, in other words, what Gurdjieff calls a "remarkable man," i.e., someone who

stands out from those around him by the resourcefulness of his mind, and who knows how to be restrained in the manifestations which proceed from his nature, at the same time conducting himself justly and tolerantly towards the weaknesses of others. (M:31)

2. For a detailed exposition of the three/four personalities in man, and the rendering of the carriage analogy, see Gurdjieff's "From the Author" as the concluding section of the First Series (1950). Passages of this have already been cited in Introduction.

Gurdjieff's Epistemological Apparatus

For Gurdjieff the division of human consciousness into three independently operating realms (unconscious/instinctive, conscious, and subconscious) and therefore the very existence of the emotionally constituted subconscious mind are significant. The “waking consciousness” is for him only a partial and largely inadequate domain of awareness. Subsequently, the threefold conception of the human brain is for him a foundational tool using which he constructs his own epistemological apparatus.

For Gurdjieff, the complete de-linking of the three centers leads to a state in the organism that is for all practical purposes equivalent to the *ordinary sleep*. The possibility of dreaming in the ordinary sense is for Gurdjieff simply a result of incomplete separation of the three centers and such dreams are not of much value in understanding the human psyche. If there is a dreaming process while asleep, it is for him an indication of a lack of satisfaction of the aim of sleep (1984:117–18)—i.e., to de-link the three centers completely so that they can “recharge” themselves during sleep.

Waking consciousness, however, is not for Gurdjieff what full awareness entails. For Gurdjieff, most of what the individual considers to be her or his wakeful state is in fact simply a different state of sleep. The reason for this is that ordinary education and conditions of life do not prepare the individual for consciously linking and blending the functioning of her or his three centers, such that the unconscious, the “conscious,” and the “subconscious” minds still operate independently and separately from one another. Only if one is able to consciously link and blend the functioning of one’s three centers, only when one senses, knows, and feels the object of one’s awareness with all the three centers at the same time, can one consider one’s consciousness “objective.” *Objective consciousness* involves a conscious re-linking and blending of the three brains’ functioning in everyday life. And *cosmic consciousness*, or *conscience*, is arrived at when the self-awareness, objectively achieved, is blended with the awareness of the sense, knowledge, and feelings about the goal and aim of one’s existence in the universe as a whole. In a state of real conscience or “pure reason,” one simultaneously senses, knows, and feels not only the meaning and purpose of one’s own existence, but also experiences oneself as a part of the workings of a purposeful universe.

Gurdjieff expresses these levels of awareness allegorically in terms of a measuring rod (or “determinatory”) invented by angels in charge of the Planet Purgatory:

“It is necessary to tell you that concerning the determination of the degrees of individuality, our cherubim and seraphim also then at the very beginning established that still now existing sacred “Determinatory-of-Reason” which is applied for the determination of the gradations of Reason or, more exactly,

the 'totality-of-self-awareness' of all separate large and small cosmic concentrations, and by which not only are the gradations of their Reason measured, but there is also determined their, as it is called, "degree-of-justification-of-the-sense-and-aim-of-their-existence," and also the further role of each separate individual in relation to everything existing in our great Megalocosmos.

"This sacred Determinatory of 'pure reason' is nothing else than a kind of measure, i.e., a line divided into equal parts; one end of this line is marked as the total absence of any Reason, i.e., absolute 'firm-calm,' and at the other end there is indicated absolute Reason, i.e., the Reason of our INCOMPARABLE CREATOR ENDLESSNESS." (B:769)

The above passage also highlights Gurdjieff's broad view of consciousness and 'Reason' in general, applying it not only to living organisms, but to inanimate objects ("firm calm"). Gurdjieff's view of consciousness or intelligence as such is derived from his ontological standpoint of viewing all existence as being material in nature, intelligence signifying different degrees of its "vibrations" or "vivifyingness."

Ordinary sleep, waking consciousness, objective consciousness, and cosmic consciousness (conscience) are therefore four different levels of awareness Gurdjieff considers to be possible for the human organism. His three series of writings is intended to display especially how a cosmic consciousness centered on the need for development of self-knowledge and self-transformation through "being-Partkdolg-duty" can be possible.

Gurdjieff on Education and Language

If we consider Gurdjieff's "three-brained" conception of human organism, it becomes clear why he criticizes the customary practices of education. For him, true education must involve teachings that help the person become aware and in control of the functionings of all the three centers of her or his consciousness such that he or she can master the three modes of awareness and their blending into one another. However, in his view, the customary education focuses solely, and inadequately, on the development of the physical (such as sports and gymnastics) and the intellectual brains, generally losing sight of the need to educate the individual about the subconscious functioning of her or his *emotional brain*.

Science of human consciousness and education, in other words, must include an understanding of human subconscious mind to help the individual acquire a working understanding (not just book knowledge, but practical skills) (B:1166) of her or his emotions and how they can be known and modified at will. Again, this is not about an intellectual knowledge about the psyche, but a practical understanding of one's own organism across unconscious, subconscious, and waking conscious, realms.

The inadequacies of language in general and education in particular are for Gurdjieff rooted also in the inadequate understanding of the threefold nature of the human brain system. Any language that is solely based on formal intellectual and conceptual tools is deficient in its role of communicating meanings since it loses sight of the fact that meanings are constituted not by one (thoughts) but by all the three brains of the human organism containing sensual, conceptual, and emotional forms of awareness. To properly communicate a meaning through a language, therefore, one needs to keep in mind that the same word (such as “world”) can have completely different meanings for individuals from different psychological, cultural or professional backgrounds (M:1–31; see also Gurdjieff 1984:60–74).

Gurdjieff’s considerable emphasis at the beginning and throughout most of his writings on the problem of language indicates the extent to which he sought not only to make his readers aware of the problem of language in literature and art, but also to practically apply this knowledge in his own writings. In the preface to his First Series (“Arousing of Thought”), for instance, Gurdjieff makes it clear to his readers, through a series of warnings to them, that he intended by way of his writings to affect not only the intellectual realm, but also the “feeling” or subconscious domain of their ordinary consciousness. That is, the sensuous and emotional stories and allegories he weaves into his otherwise intellectual enterprise in all his series are intended to reach out to *all* the three brains of his reader. Note for example how Gurdjieff explains the sense and aims of his three series to his readers at the outset of his writings:

All written according to entirely new principles of logical reasoning and strictly directed towards the solution of the following three cardinal problems:

FIRST SERIES: To destroy, mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever, in the **mentation and feelings** of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world.

SECOND SERIES: To acquaint the reader with the material required for a new creation and to prove the soundness and good quality of it.

THIRD SERIES: To assist the arising, in the **mentation and in the feelings** of the reader, of a veritable, nonfantastic representation not of that illusory world which he now perceives, but of the world existing in reality. (B:4; emphasis in bold added)

The aim, in other words, is to directly communicate with not only the conceptual apparatuses, but also the subconscious emotional realms of his readers’ minds through devising allegories and utilizing visual images that allow such communications to take place.

The same threefold strategy can be found in Gurdjieff's pedagogical style, where he sought not simply through book knowledge, but also through various physical movements and emotional exercises and dances to reach out to the inner psyche of his pupils in order to help them in their efforts to know and transform themselves. His teaching style amid everyday life activities, whether spontaneous or intentional, also utilized the three physical, intellectual, and emotional elements of each event to transform an ordinary life event into a learning and teaching experience.

While Gurdjieff does not use the term "meditation," his emphasis on "being-Partkdolg-Duty" is in essence his way of addressing the practice throughout his teaching. In many ways, Gurdjieff's whole philosophical apparatus, and also theoretical and practical aspects of his teaching that we will explore in subsequent chapters, are aimed at highlighting the significance of a meditative approach to human existence amid life. Without the conscious and intentional efforts to know and change oneself as prescribed within a cosmology as introduced by Gurdjieff especially in his First Series, humanity will remain caught in the mechanical and automatic trance of everyday life. Gurdjieff's "fourth way" contribution to an epistemology of meditation resides both in his emphasis on the need for simultaneous blending of the forces of all three centers, and on the blending of the retreat types of mediation with the ongoing activities of everyday life.

The most important implication of Gurdjieff's emphasis on the threefold nature of consciousness in human organism, however, must be traced to his emphasis on the significance of the ("ancient") science of hypnosis. The need for communicating across and blending the three centers in the human organism explains why it was so important for Gurdjieff to learn that branch of ancient (and modern) psychological sciences which dealt with the nature of the human subconscious mind. Hypnotism constitutes the very essence of the implications he drew from the seemingly irreconcilable and conflicting book knowledge and practical data he collected about how one could know and change oneself. As we shall see, hypnotism as a science plays a central and fundamental role in the grand arsenal of Gurdjieff's epistemological apparatus.

Gurdjieff's philosophical system as delineated in this and the previous two chapters explains how human life as a mechanical apparatus resulting from the involutory process of the ray of creation can consciously and intentionally evolve along the path of return to God. A considerable amount of his writings, however, is devoted to the explanation of why human beings have hitherto failed in achieving such an evolutionary goal in the first place. In order to examine this important dimension of Gurdjieff's *weltanschauung* as a whole, we need to turn now to his theory of human disharmonization (Chapter Four) and his prescriptive practice of "harmonious development of man" (Chapter Five).

Chapter Four **THE “ORGAN KUNDABUFFER” THEORY OF
HUMAN DISHARMONIZATION**

“But meanwhile, know that these three-brained beings arising on the planet Earth who interest you, had in them in the beginning the same possibilities for perfecting the functions for the acquisition of being-Reason as have all other forms of ‘Tetartocosmoses’ arising throughout the whole Universe.”

—B:86

“The particularity of the action of the consequences of the properties of the said organ on the common psyche of people consists just in this that, thanks to it, there does not arise among most contemporary people—these three-brained beings in whom were placed all the hopes and expectations of our CREATOR, as possible servers of higher purposes—the cognition of any of these genuine terrors, and also that it enables them peacefully to carry on their existence in unconscious fulfillment of what was foreordained, but in the service only of Nature’s nearest immediate aims, as they have meanwhile lost, on account of their unbecoming abnormal life, any possibility of serving higher purposes.”

—B:1222

Broadly speaking, there is nothing in Gurdjieff’s philosophical apparatus that would stand in the way of his arguing that the three-brained beings on the planet Earth, like other three-brained beings in other parts of the universe, are

potentially able, individually as well as collectively as a species, to transcend their naturally inherited mechanical life in order to serve their "higher" evolutionary needs and the cosmic needs of their Creator. *Potentially, all* Earthly three-brained beings *can awaken* to their involutory mechanicalness and lead a conscious and intentional life toward achieving "being-Reason." In fact, through Beelzebub, Gurdjieff often laments and is saddened by the fact that the inhabitants of this "peculiar" planet in the universe have uniquely fallen on hard times in terms of not having been able to fulfill the potentials invested in them by God.

The Earth's misfortune is therefore not rooted in the grand Megalocosmic structure of the universe, but is due rather to local factors.¹

Woven into the body of Gurdjieff's teaching and writings, especially in the First Series, is a concerted effort to explain why such a cosmic misfortune befell the three-brained beings inhabiting the Earth, and how this misfortune can be reversed to allow the full evolutionary development of their species to fall again on the right track.

The key to Gurdjieff's explanation and remedy for the misfortune befallen the three-brained inhabitants of the Earth is his theory of "organ Kundabuffer." Gurdjieff's explanatory construct "organ Kundabuffer" ties together the essential elements of his whole cosmology to explain why the human efforts to develop harmoniously on Earth has hitherto failed.

Let us then begin with Gurdjieff's genesis story of the Earth.

The Earth's Genesis

In Gurdjieff's story of creation, the early process of formation of the Earth as a third-order sun was prematurely interrupted by an unforeseen catastrophe of galactic proportions that called for taking special measures.

The original planet-still-in-formation, in its very early stages of concentration, before any life-forms had yet a cause to arise on it, was "accidentally" struck by a comet called "Kondoor" whose orbit was not supposed to intersect with that of the early planet Earth. As a result of this cosmic misfortune, totally unforeseen by higher archangelic forces, two pieces were split from what now constitutes the planet Earth. The larger piece is now called the Moon, and a second smaller piece was originally called Anulios, whose name and very existence have been forgotten partly due to its remote, hitherto undetected, orbit around the Earth.

But note this important point. The fact that the Earth thus became a satellite(s) possessing planet, in itself, is not a unique event in Gurdjieff's

1. This in my view is one of the most important differences between Gurdjieff's views as presented in his own writings and those ascribed to him by Ouspensky (1949). Ouspensky's "Gurdjieff" is more pessimistic in that he finds the Earth's inevitable misfortunes to be a result of its location on the ray of creation.

universe. Even Beelzebub's own home planet Karatas in another solar system has a satellite. What was unique about the Earthly experience was that the formation of the satellites took place prematurely, purely a result of accident, completely miscalculated and unforeseen by the higher archangelic forces overseeing the process of Earth's involutory process. Caught off-guard, in other words, the archangels had to immediately take certain additional provisional measures in order to remedy the consequences of this unforeseen cosmic event—measures that later proved to be equally fruitful *and* catastrophic for the evolution of the future three-brained human beings arising on Earth.

It is true that the balance of the solar system was soon restored thanks to the automatic influence of gravity by the Earth and other concentrations of the solar system on the two satellites. However, in order to make this reacquired harmony permanent, an additional measure was needed.

Namely, to compensate for the unexpected new developments, it became necessary to begin the process of involution of organic life on Earth earlier, which could only be possible through the intervention of archangelic forces with the sanction of God Himself. The reason such a measure became necessary was that the new harmony could be established on a more or less permanent basis, so it was thought, based only on the requirement that the Earth begin sooner than anticipated to constantly transmit to its two previous fragments a sacred vibration called "Askokin" (B:84)—a vibration that also happens to be the same substance that is freed either as a result of the performance of being-Partkdolg-duty of evolved Tetartocosmoses on any planet and/or as a result of the death of the physical body of living things of any exterior form, including humans (B:182–83; see also B:1107). From a broader cosmic standpoint, the three fragments were now to be treated as parts of the same Earthly system, a new system within the solar system, involving the relatively independent operations of the Laws of Three and Seven at its own scale of existence (B:84)—a condition that brings forth the rise of organic life on the planet (B:85–86). The Earth had to now transmit a certain gravitational (magnetic) vibration to the other two satellites so as to keep them permanently in harmony.

According to Gurdjieff's story of origination of the Earth, therefore, the *premature timing* of the genesis and "birth" of organic life on Earth was purely a result of an unforeseen accident, but an accident that, once occurred, had to be made to conform to the general laws of operation of the universe. Organic (and later human) life on Earth thus play a functional role in the maintenance of the two former fragments of Earth's existence.

However, one should again note that for Gurdjieff the requirement of transmission of such vibrations to the satellites does not seem to be particularly abnormal in the universe. In fact, given the Megalocosmic picture Gurdjieff draws in the chapter on "The Holy Planet 'Purgatory'"

(B:744–810), any cosmic concentration radiates to its own “results,” and in this the (new) Earth as a satellite(s)-possessing planet is no exception. Gurdjieff’s reference to the arising of such conditions on the planet “just as on many others” is indicative of the Earth’s not being unique in this regard.²

So, while the presence of satellites does influence the fate of the planet, it was the *unanticipated timing* of the planetary split in the involutory path that caused much concern. The very need for the transmission of vibrations so early to the moons necessitated the involution of a particular form of Tetartocosmic life forms that correspond to satellite-possessing variations of planetary involution. This was not originally planned for the planet Earth. The very natures of involutory and evolutionary processes on the planet were drastically affected as a result of the Earth’s becoming a satellite(s) possessing planet, as compared to the planets that stand alone. Note that for Gurdjieff Purgatory is, by contrast, a life-accommodating non-satellite-possessing planet. A satellite-possessing planet has a part of itself outside itself, and thus is subjected to more outside mechanical forces. It is less self-reliant and self-perpetuating than a planet orbiting its sun on its own.

Gurdjieff’s comet Kondoor story is his version of the Adam and Eve mythology encountered in other religions. It is in fact surprising that despite his having dealt with literally “all and everything” in his series of writings, Gurdjieff has nothing major³ to say about the most commonly told story of Genesis. And this is perhaps one of the most significant “inexactitudes” of his own “objective,” mythological artwork as expressed through his life and writings.⁴ We will later come back and explore the intended subjective meanings behind his cosmological Adam and Eve story.

Upon restoration of the orbital order to the planet and its satellites, the “normal” (though now modified for a satellite-possessing planet) involutory process began to proceed on its surface, and eventually Tetartocosmic ancestors of human beings began to roam the Earth. But

2. In this context, the attribution of an overall “pessimistic” nature to Gurdjieff’s cosmology, as evident in Ouspensky’s rendering of it (1949), is misplaced and one-sided. The presence of moon is not in itself a hindrance to human perfectibility in Gurdjieff’s cosmology.

3. The only reference, in passing, to Adam appears on page 96, and to Adam and Eve on page 776 in the First Series and the latter is made as a joke about the expelling of Adam and Eve from paradise because of their having lost their modesty and for having begun to cover themselves.

4. Gurdjieff’s theory of “objective art” or ancient artistic creation involves the belief that many important messages were transmitted through art to future generations by ancient learned beings by intentionally embedding obvious puzzles (which Gurdjieff calls, lawful or intentional inexactitudes, or elements not according to law) in their artwork that would lead, through intuition and examination, to the revelation of important truths about the past. In this case, the *absence* of the Adam and Eve story, and the alternative offering of the comet Kondoor story, immediately points to the possibility that the two stories need to be considered in relation to one another.

note here one of the great differences the two moons have made on the development of the three-brained beings on Earth. Instead of being “Monoenithits” (B:770), that is, species in whose individuals the sexual opposites are concentrated in the same planetary body, in this case the process of procreation (the last stopinder of the Law of Seven) proceeds not within one “cosmic concentration” but across two concentrations. The individual three-brained being is subjected, in other words, to more outside influences than would be a unisex being. From a sexual and procreative standpoint, the individual human being is turned into a half-being. For this reason, the evolving three-brained beings on Earth became potentially more mechanical than those on satellite-free planet concentrations. The internalization of the cosmic configurations of the two moons on the planetary beings on Earth became manifested in the emergence of three sexual types: male, female, and a smaller “mixed sex” type. This is Gurdjieff’s story of Genesis, of the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib, and the splitting of the sexes.

Yet, again, we should note that this splitting of the sexes does not make the Earth particularly unique in the universe. Even Beelzebub’s species on Karatas, a satellite-possessing planet, are also split into two sexes (B:771). There is even another planet in the universe, Gurdjieff tells us, on which there are three different sexes procreating individually perfected beings (B:771–73)—a perfect arrangement according to Gurdjieff for they each conceive the corresponding already perfected higher-being-body of the “child” before it is born, and then merge them into one during the process of giving birth together. Gurdjieff suggests that such a procreative practice is in fact common among angels in Protocosmos, that is, on the Sun Absolute where God resides. All this means is that species in satellite-possessing planets have to simply adapt their evolutionary paths, and especially their being-Partkdolg-duty performances, to the special conditions of their planetary and biological configurations. It is perhaps more difficult and enslaving because (sexual) life is more mechanical, but still possible and this is not uncommon in the universe.

The “Organ Kundabuffer”

What further caused the misfortune for the human species was not a mechanically/automatically operating cosmic law—nor even an unforeseen accident (the collision with comet Kondoor) that paradoxically had the effect of turning the planet into a satellites- and life-form possessing variety of “third-order suns”—but the fact that *it took place prematurely*, necessitating the adoption of a particular additional measure by archangels to safeguard the proper future development of life on Earth.

Based on the hypothesis that the eventual mechanically pre-ordained arising of pure reason among humans (which was predicted in the divine

plan of changed laws and of creation) may lead to their *premature* discovery of the unbearably sad reality of their enslavement in supplying "Askokin" to the two satellites, and thus to the inclination to commit mass suicides and sacrifices among them—in turn endangering the harmony of the planet and the solar system due to a stop in the supply of vibrations—the archangels experimentally planted in "good conscience" at the base of the early human ancestors' spinal column, at the root of their tail, a special organ called "organ Kundabuffer" (B:89).

This special organ had two main properties (B:88): 1-it made them see reality "topsy-turvy"; and 2-it made them feel "pleasure" and "enjoyment" upon repetition of any external impression. Its effect was such that mere imaginations and illusions would be perceived as reality by the organism, and thereby satisfy its needs as if they were real. According to Gurdjieff, the effects of this organ on the human psyche was similar to the effects of cocaine on the human brain (B:430). For all practical purposes, the organ made the future Earthly human beings fall asleep to the reality of their fate and the inevitability of their own death, instead seeing their cosmic reality "topsy-turvy" and becoming agreeably suggestible to repetitive stimuli.⁵

Note that the two properties of the "organ Kundabuffer" are *directly opposite* to what is expected to result from being-Partkdolg-duty, that is, from conscious labors and intentional sufferings, as a precondition for coating higher-being-bodies in human beings. If being-partkdolg-duty involves concerted efforts to know and transform one's mechanized and habituated being, the "organ Kundabuffer" induces the organism into illusory/imaginary views of oneself and the world, accompanied by a tendency to avoid suffering and instead to indulge in immediate repetitively induced pleasures. The "organ Kundabuffer," inducing the organism to seek comfort in a self-delusive/imagined mechanical life, was simply a countermeasure against the premature awakening of the human organism to the reality of life on Earth. It was meant to be, in "good conscience," a temporary measure.

What, more exactly, is this "organ Kundabuffer" that is so central to and reverberating throughout Gurdjieff's First Series, writings as a whole, and teaching in general? In order to understand further the nature of this organ, it is important to consider exactly what threats the archangels were seeking to avoid in expectation of the potential future calamities awaiting the Earth.

5. Note, for now, the implications of the two properties of the organ Kundabuffer for the sexual function. Instead of 'real' reproductive interactions, it becomes possible to enjoy sexual interaction with others not only as an end in itself, but also alone, through repetitive action and stimuli of "illusory" impressions that take the place of actual impressions communicated via direct interaction among the sexes during reproductive activity. The significance of this consideration will be explored later in this study.

According to Beelzebub, to guarantee the cosmic harmony of the solar system (and Megalocosmos, by extension), there must be born on Earth sufficient Tetartocosmic life forms, and human beings in particular, who would on a continual basis send the necessary vibrations to the satellites to keep them in their orbits. An *evolved* human species would have normally been able to supply the required vibrations consciously and intentionally through their persistent performance of being-Partkdolg-duty. So the angels were not worried about the remote future fate of the Earth, where the human species would have been already evolved. The archangels' worry was in regard to the period of *transition* to that higher stage.

The key point in Gurdjieff is the word "prematurely" (also mentioned in other parts of his First Series (e.g., see B:1226). The archangels worried that human beings' *premature* awareness of their enslavement to the satellites, before having understood the cosmic meaning of their lives, would lead to an early ending of their lives through fear and suicide on a mass scale. In order to avoid such a *premature* death to the species, the archangels adopted the *provisional* measure of implanting the "organ Kundabuffer" in their physical bodies, so that they would mechanically and instinctively be guarded against their premature fear and suicide—that is, before having arrived, at a more mature evolutionary stage, at having discovered their sense and aim in the universe and their being-Partkdolg-duties.

There was a need to guarantee, during the transitional period, sufficient numbers of human beings and life forms who could be born and die on a continual basis to supply the necessary vibrations mechanically by the fact of their dying—for at that early time in the involution of pre-humans there could be no possibility of conscious labors and intentional sufferings. Therefore, there had to be an instinctive mechanism in place in their physical bodies that would make them simultaneously insensitive to the terrifying reality of their own inevitable death, *and* interested in the repetitive pleasures of procreative activity. The "organ Kundabuffer" for Gurdjieff is for all practical purpose an organ for hypnotizing human organisms away from horrors of death and toward pleasures of the flesh.

Kundabuffer was an organ "thanks to the engendering properties of which they might be protected from the possibility of seeing and feeling anything as it proceeds in reality" (B:1220). It was a provisional organ implanted in the pre-human organism to make it instinctively susceptible to hypnotic influence, thereby conditioning the organism to indulge in the illusion of a permanent and pleasing this-worldly life—rather than to seek, through conscious labors of self-knowledge and intentional sufferings of self-transformation, to know and change one's mechanical life in favor of sensing the real purpose and meaning of life in the universe. The (pre)human organism was organically hypnotized, though at first only as a provisional measure, to believe in the illusive permanence and pleasures of

this-worldly life. It is for this reason that Gurdjieff considers being-Partkdolg-duty the antidote to the properties and crystallizations of the "organ Kundabuffer" down the human generations.

The "Organ Kundabuffer" and Hypnosis

It is noteworthy and important to consider the fact that in his First Series Gurdjieff does not directly and explicitly make any connections between "organ Kundabuffer" and hypnosis, although he discusses both at length throughout the text. Even though what follows is a diversion from the present hermeneutic exploration of Gurdjieff's own text, it may be worthwhile to make this digression since the essence of the link between hypnosis and the "organ Kundabuffer" is clearly present in Gurdjieff's own text.

The most explicit link established by Gurdjieff between the two had already been conveyed through oral teachings to his most senior pupil, Ouspensky (1949:220), several years earlier and had been noted down by the latter with Gurdjieff's permission for a possible future publication. In that passage which Maurice Nicoll, a pupil of Ouspensky, also had access to and includes it in his writings (Nicoll 1985:307–8), Ouspensky quotes Gurdjieff as suggesting that by the term "Kundalini"—used often in the occult literature and wrongly associated in a positive and desirable way with sex and human sexual energy—is to be understood the human state of hypnotic sleep in life. "In reality Kundalini is the power of imagination, the power of fantasy, which takes the place of a real function," Ouspensky quotes Gurdjieff as saying (1949:220). It has been implanted in humans to keep them in their sleep; to awaken, they need to be dehypnotized (Ibid.)

It was perhaps to avoid the missassociations built around the term "Kundalini" that Gurdjieff decided to modify it in the First Series to "organ Kundabuffer." It is not a positive, desirable energy, but a "buffer" and obstacle to awakening.

Given the rift that emerged between Gurdjieff and Ouspensky in the Spring of 1918 (Ouspensky 1949:375), Gurdjieff practically knew nothing of Ouspensky's having written his promised book about his teaching. In fact, it was only after Ouspensky's death in 1948, and shortly before Gurdjieff's own passing in 1949, that Gurdjieff became aware through Ouspensky's widow of the manuscript—approving in general its contents and consenting to its publication. To what extent Gurdjieff became familiar with all the details of Ouspensky's text is not clear, though fragments of it were read by his pupils in meetings at Gurdjieff's request. The point here is to indicate that Gurdjieff's efforts in his own writings to avoid explicit and direct connections between the "organ Kundabuffer" and hypnotism were made at a time when he was not aware of Ouspensky's writings about the subject, though he had obviously (reportedly) spoken those words to him in person.

The “organ Kundabuffer,” representing the suggestibility of human beings and their propensity to be hypnotized into seeing things “topsy-turvy” in response to repetitively induced pleasant stimuli, is particularly evident in Gurdjieff’s discussion in the First Series regarding the degeneration of the divine impulse Faith into its opposite. In terms of Faith, the tendency is to “believe-any-old-tale” (B:356):

“It is perfectly easy to convince beings of this planet of anything you like, provided only during their perceptions of these “fictions,” there is evoked in them and there proceeds, either consciously from without, or automatically by itself, the functioning of one or another corresponding consequence of the properties of the organ Kundabuffer crystallized in them from among those that form what is called the “subjectivity” of the given beings, as for instance: “self-love,” “vanity,” “pride,” “swagger,” “imagination,” “bragging,” “arrogance,” and so on.

“From the influence of such actions upon their degenerated Reason and on the degenerated factors in their localizations, which factors actualize their being-sensations, not only is there crystallized a false conviction concerning the mentioned fictions, but thereafter in all sincerity and faith, they will even vehemently prove to those around them, that it is just so and can in no way be otherwise.” (B:356)

In terms of the other two divine impulses of Love and Hope, also, the blending of genuine impulses with the hypnotic tendency has degenerated these impulses and prevented them from acting as guiding spiritualizing factors in the past major religions (B:356–57). The sole element in their psyche that has escaped hypnotic degeneration, Gurdjieff writes, is that of real conscience, and that is because it has been for millennia deeply buried in the subconscious.

Kundabuffer as a provisional organ to induce hypnosis implanted in the early humans was meant by its archangelic designers to prevent human beings from *prematurely* sensing the reality of their own inevitable mortality and instead be content with the illusive pleasures of this-worldly, Earthly life. It made humans interested in their planetary environment and bodies as ends in themselves, rather than seeing them only as vehicles and a stage for a much wider cosmic journey. The real purpose of the Megalocosmos became veiled from them due to their preoccupations with the immediate necessities of a limited planetary life. In this sense, they saw reality “topsy-turvy” and repetitively sought pleasure in it.

Consequences of the “Organ Kundabuffer”

The angels sought to enact, in “good conscience,” a provisional measure for early humans to safeguard their future evolution. The trouble according to Gurdjieff was that they did not take into account that the consequences of

that organ, even when it was itself removed, would continue to trouble the future human generations in terms of leaving in them a propensity to become habituated to things. The problem was that the twofold properties of the "organ Kundabuffer" became crystallized in the human nature despite the organ's being itself removed from their bodies at a later time by those who planted them (B:90).

Why did the angels think that a *premature* awakening of human beings may take place? Why would the Earthly three-brained beings evolve any differently from other three-brained beings on satellite-possessing planets? Why would the reality of their comparably more mechanical life (i.e., enslavements to their respective "fragments," cosmically, and biologically) be necessarily any more difficult to deal with than their other similar counterparts in the universe? Why would they commit suicide as a result?

Gurdjieff's answer is simply that this was perhaps all a grand cosmic mistake, though performed in "good conscience," on the part of archangelic forces. An initial miscalculation of movements of heavenly bodies (comet Kondoor) leads to an unforeseen collision, bringing about new or changed involutory and evolutionary paths for the planet and its future inhabitants, and finally leading to an impulsive reaction (out of "good conscience") by the archangelic forces to prevent a future evolutionary disaster for humans that may have perhaps not even taken place. In Gurdjieff's mythos, in other words, mistakes were not due to any problems in the Godly designs and plans for creation, but a result of archangelic mistakes and good-intentioned archangelic impulsive behaviors.⁶

This is Gurdjieff's explanation of the causes of the fall of humanity, as expressed in the form of his metaphor, the hypnotic "organ Kundabuffer." The hypnotic indulgence of pre-humans on an illusive and pleasing Earthly life, had its roots, simply, in the mistakes of the higher archangelic elders. This is enough of an explanation for Gurdjieff of the fundamental cause of the Earthly misfortunes. Defects of knowledge are sufficient explanations for him, since for him even knowledge (and its defects) is a material force that can determine the course of cosmic events. As "absurd" as this may seem at first, the symbolic structure of the tale points to important hidden meanings about Gurdjieff's own life, as we shall see later.

For now, let us read Gurdjieff's indignant words, through the voice of Beelzebub, about such "almost criminal" short-sightednesses "from above":

"Then, namely, for the second time in the whole of my existence, there proceeded in my Being the process of this same being-Sarpitimnian-

6. Echoing the words of his grandfather, Beelzebub, Hasein also comes to believe by the end of the tales that the planting of the "organ Kundabuffer" in the bodies of human ancestors was a result of "unforeseeingness of certain Most High Sacred Individuals" (B:1162).

experiencing, which had engendered in my common presence a revolt on account of various unforeseeingnesses on the part of our Most High, Most Saintly Cosmic Individuals, and of all the objective misfortunes flowing from them, which have already obtained and, maybe, will still continue to obtain on this planet Earth as well as in all our Great Universe.

“How was it possible not to foresee in their calculations of the harmonious movement of cosmic concentrations that the comet Kondoor would collide with this ill-fated planet Earth?

“If those who should have done so had foreseen this, then all subsequent unfortunate consequences issuing one from the other would not have happened and there would not have been the need to implant in the first three-brained beings of that ill-fated planet that, for them, maleficent organ Kundabuffer which was the cause of all subsequent distressing and terrifying results.

“It was true that later when it was no longer necessary and this for them maleficent organ was destroyed, they yet again did not foresee that by the destruction of the organ itself the possibility was not destroyed that in the future the given consequences of its properties would, owing to a certain manner of existence of the beings, become crystallized in the presences of their descendants.

“In other words, they did not foresee for the second time also that even if it were possible to destroy that organ, yet the fundamental Cosmic Law Heptaparaparshinokh with its ‘Mdnel-Ins’ nevertheless remains, in the sense of the evolutionary process for the three-brained beings of the planet Earth as for everything existing in the whole Universe.

“It was thanks particularly to the second almost criminal ‘unforeseeingness’⁷ that this situation, terrifying for the three-brained beings, obtains there, namely, that on the one hand there are in their common presences as in the presences of all the three-brained beings of our Great Universe, all the possibilities for coating the ‘higher-being-bodies,’ and at the same time, thanks to the crystallization which has become inherent in them of the various consequences of the organ Kundabuffer, it is almost impossible for them to carry the higher sacred parts coated in them up to the required degree of perfecting. And since, according to the fundamental common

7. J. Walter Driscoll has drawn my attention to other examples of “unforeseeingnesses” found in Gurdjieff’s cosmic story, expressive of the extent to which Gurdjieff allowed for the possibility of accidental events in cosmic affairs. These include the delay in Karnak’s route (B:58); how humans must still face self-created abnormal conditions (132); how unconvinced Angelic Commission sought to assure everyone, including HIS ENDLESSNESS (B:179–180), regarding its remedies; Buddha’s Sermon regarding the “organ Kundabuffer” (B:236) and the absence of foresight in its regard (B:239); unforeseeingness in relation to war (B:718); or even the effect, unforeseen by HIS ENDLESSNESS (!), of Time (Heropass) on the shrinking of the Sun Absolute (B:759).

cosmic laws, such a formation as their 'higher-being-part,' coated in the common presences of three-brained beings, is not subject to decomposition on planets, and since the planetary body of the beings cannot endlessly exist on planets and the process of the sacred Rascoarno⁸ must inevitably proceed with them at the proper time, therefore, their unfortunate higher bodies arising in the terrestrial three-brained beings must inevitably languish also forever in all kinds of exterior planetary forms."⁹ (B:672-74)

In considering the above characterization of the archangelic shortcomings and mistakes as the fundamental cause of human disharmonization,¹⁰ it must be pointed out that for Gurdjieff the chief cause of *continuation* of the problem rests with the human beings themselves and the conditions they have *themselves* established in their lives, for they have now in their being what is essentially necessary to move beyond the consequences of the long-removed organ:

"You yourself will very well understand that although the fundamental causes of the whole chaos that now reigns on that ill-fated planet Earth were certain 'unforeseeingnesses,' coming from Above on the part of various Sacred Individuals, yet nevertheless the chief causes for the developing of further ills are only those abnormal conditions of ordinary being-existence which they themselves gradually established and which they continue to establish down to the present time." (B:132-33).

Gurdjieff is elsewhere even more emphatic in putting the overall blame for the *continuing* human disharmonization on humans themselves:

"Concerning all this it must be said that neither the organ Kundabuffer which their ancestors had is to blame, nor its consequences which, owing to a mistake on the part of certain Sacred Individuals, were crystallized in their ancestors and later began to pass by heredity from generation to generation.

"But they themselves were personally to blame for it, and just on account of the abnormal conditions of external ordinary being-existence which they

8. This is Gurdjieff's term for death.

9. It is interesting to note that in the last sentence, Gurdjieff gives hints of believing in planetary, and not just Kesdjanic, reincarnation, especially of the involutory/regressive kind, but later dismisses reincarnation as a maleficent factor in the deterioration of Reason (B:767).

10. Generally, Gurdjieff's balance sheet for the clumsy celestial bureaucracy alternates between condemnation and humour. He sometimes suggests the implantation of Kundabuffer was an "almost criminal" unforeseeingness on the part of archangels (B:674), while at other times considers that Nature was actually constrained for "important reasons" to "wisely" (B:1226) introduce this organ into the human organism (B:1220) for the human beings' own protection against destroying themselves if they prematurely realize the futility of life. Regarding the particular affinity and parallels of these aspects of Gurdjieff's cosmic story to the teacher-pupil relationship and the role of the hypnotic method in his teaching, more will be said in the Conclusion.

themselves have gradually established and which have gradually formed in their common presence just what has now become their inner ‘Evil-God,’ called ‘Self-Calming.’” (B:104–5)

Given the propensity of the human organism toward mechanicalness, the habitual results of the “organ Kundabuffer” continued to remain crystallized in the organism of the human beings down their generations. In Gurdjieff’s words, the most unusual manifestations that began to be displayed immediately in the behavior of the pre-human beings as a result of this organ and its later habituated consequences was that human beings periodically began to rapidly grow in population and then, conversely, to destroy one another’s existence on a mass scale in regional and global wars. This greatly astonished even Beelzebub himself who periodically gazed through his telescope from Mars upon the life of this peculiar planet:

“But by close observation, first, it could be clearly seen that the numbers of these three-brained beings were gradually increasing and, secondly, it was possible sometimes to observe very strange manifestations of theirs, that is, from time to time they did something which was never done by three-brained beings on other planets, namely, they would suddenly, without rhyme or reason, begin destroying one another’s existence ...

“It was sometimes very noticeable also that from this horrible process of theirs their numbers rapidly diminished; but on the other hand, during other periods, when there was a lull in these processes, their numbers also very noticeably increased.

“To this peculiarity of theirs we gradually got used, having explained it to ourselves that obviously, for certain higher considerations, these properties also must deliberately have been given to the organ Kundabuffer by the Most High Commission; in other words, seeing the fecundity of these biped beings, we assumed that this had been done with afterthought, in view of the necessity that they should exist in such large numbers for the needs of the maintenance of the common-cosmic Harmonious Movement.” (B:91–92)

Two Planetary Catastrophes

The original collision had additional planetary consequences for the Earth, which became manifest only later. Despite the normalizing of the harmony within the solar system, the event had consequences for geological integrity of the Earth. The initial collision became later, when human species had already been evolved on the planet, the cause of two additional geological catastrophes that befell the now planet Earth: 1-a great earthquake and flood of planetary proportions inundated Atlantis (B:180, 276, 559), such that what was formerly above water submerged to oceanic depths, and what was below water became new land; and 2-a great sand storm of planetary

proportions overwhelmed the country of Tikliamish, whose spread covered a great part of the Earth's surface. These two calamities held major consequences for the evolutionary trajectory of human species and, as will be discussed below, function symbolically as well.

The two additional catastrophes following the original comet collision proved not to be helpful, for they almost destroyed the results of continued efforts of the "learned members" of the Earthly three-brained being—efforts that they had made over the ages to reverse the consequences of the properties of the "organ Kundabuffer" which by their time had no organic basis in human life. The ultimate result of all this was that, today, the three-brained beings inhabiting Earth are still influenced by the habituating consequences of the original provisional measure in terms of the splitting of their psyches into two conscious and subconscious realms (as the first catastrophe); moreover, they have also forgotten (as the second catastrophe) the significance of applying the only solution discovered in ancient times that could be effective against their susceptibility to hypnotic influence: being-Partkdolg duty, or "conscious labors and intentional sufferings," or in more contemporary terms, the effort to know and transform oneself through diverse meditative practices.

In order to interpret the symbolic meaning as represented by these two planetary catastrophes, it is important to dwell further on the nature of the "organ Kundabuffer" and particularly its consequences.

What were other manifestations and consequences of the properties of the "organ Kundabuffer" in the Earthly life of human beings? Gurdjieff is particularly emphatic on the need to understand the various properties, manifestations, and consequences of the functionings of the "organ Kundabuffer" (B:89). In Figure 4.1, the various consequences of Kundabuffer as an organ for hypnosis are presented.

As illustrated, Gurdjieff establishes a multi-causal model for the explanation of factors responsible for the disharmonization of human life. While he considers the natural disasters (both the original clash and later transplanetary disasters) and the original archangelic "unforeseeingnesses" and measures adopted to be fundamental, nevertheless, once removed, consequences of the "organ Kundabuffer" do not have a cosmic and organic reason to perpetuate the abnormal conditions of human life. For this reason, while recognizing the central role played by the organ in the disharmonization of human life, Gurdjieff stresses that now the chief responsibility rests with human beings themselves and the abnormal conditions of life they have *themselves* established.

In this regard the splitting of human consciousness into the waking and the subconscious realms is of central significance for Gurdjieff. Although human beings are by nature three-brained beings and thus born with three independent functioning centers, the possibility of transcendence of such a

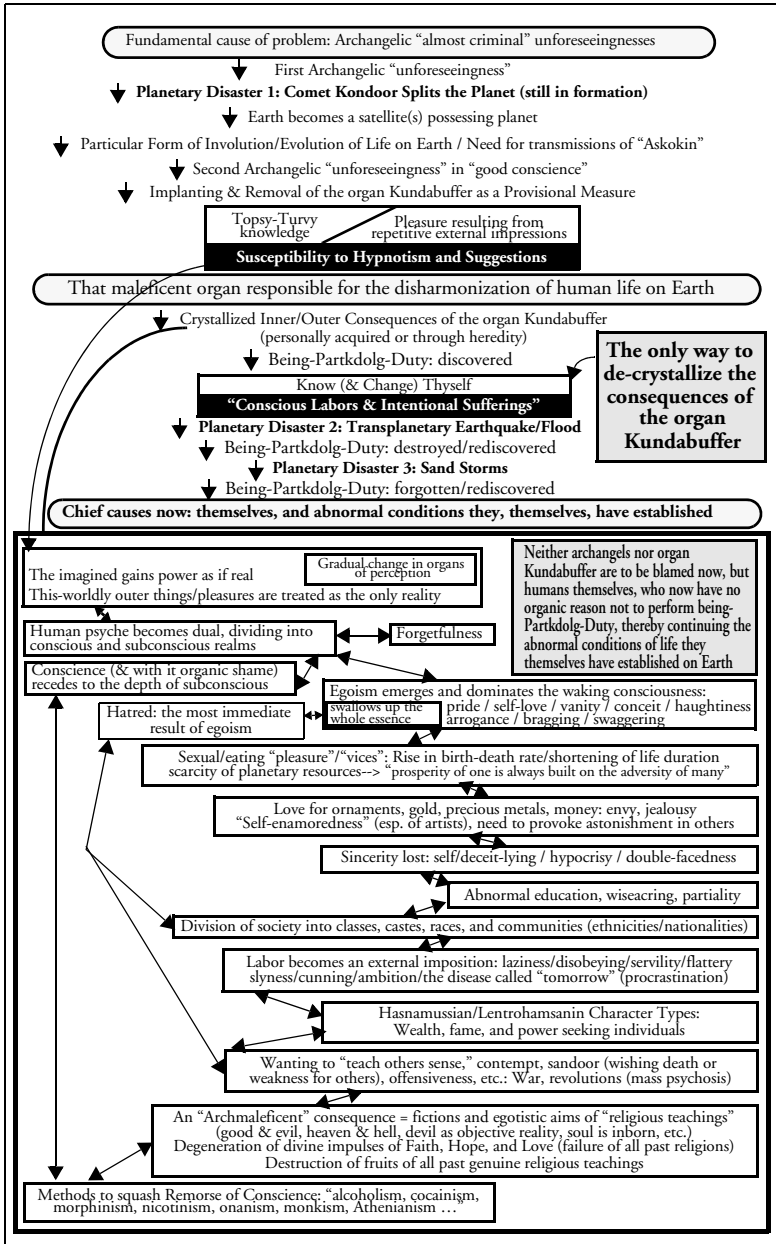


Figure 4.1 Gurdjieff's "Organ Kundabuffer" Theory of Human Disharmonization

separation in human being and consciousness is now met with a new obstacle: the crystallization of abnormal conditions of inner and outer life that help perpetuate the separation of consciousnesses and centers from one another, rather than uniting and harmonizing them. The submergence of conscience into the subconscious mind, and the emergence of egoism as the predominant element in the waking conscious mind is an important result of this split, the latter being fundamentally responsible for the divided inner and outer life of human beings.

The most important implication of Gurdjieff's "organ Kundabuffer" theory of human disharmonization is that the *root and primary cause is traced to the constitution of human inner life*. The outer life, the human societal institutions and behaviors, has become what it is because of the particular way human beings have perceived and crystallized their inner lives, themselves. And the way out of the vicious cycle, therefore, is to begin by conscious labors and intentional sufferings involved in knowing and transforming oneself. The true and most effective path to the harmonization of the human life is through the harmonization of the human inner life through personal self-knowledge and self-transformation.

The task of being-Partkdolg-duty is to guide the functioning of the three spiritualized parts such that not only the crystallized consequences of the "organ Kundabuffer" would be decrystallized, but the predisposition to further new crystallizations would be removed (B:698). It is through self-knowledge and self-transformation that the motivation to create and preserve one's Soul, atrophied by the consequences of the "organ Kundabuffer," can be reversed (B:364). While Gurdjieff suggests that many genuine prophets have hitherto been "sent from above" to help humans remove the consequences of the "organ Kundabuffer" from their psyche (B:233, 374, 695–96), the blendings of influences from their abnormal life with the original teachings—itsself a result of operation of the Law of Seven in human affairs—have degenerated the genuine divine impulses of Faith, Love, and Hope evoked by these religions in the human psyche and thereby rendered them ineffective in the strivings for self-knowledge and self-change (B:674, 733).

In Gurdjieff's view, the only hope is to rely on the still primordially preserved—because of its having been protected in the depths of the subconscious mind—of the sense of real and objective *conscience*. This is the solution discovered by the mythically all-but-forgotten prophet, Ashiata Shiemash, the only Messenger from above who succeeded in helping to create conditions that resembled, however briefly, those on other planets of the Universe (B:348). By opening the everyday life and spiritual work of the organism to the impulses of real conscience, one will be able to not only restore the sense of lost balance in the inner life of the organism, but also bring about real transformation in the broader social life. Removal of the

consequences of the “organ Kundabuffer,” that is, removal of the susceptibility to suggestion and hypnosis in life, will allow humans the possibility of becoming free, of becoming “their own individual” (B:819). Social divisions and conflicts will as a result cease by themselves, and wars and revolutions as manifestations of human mass psychosis will have no reason any longer to occur (B:387). The problems of premature physical death and aging, and the abnormal rise in both birth and death rates, will cease and the duration of life will become more normal:

“But the most astonishing and significant result of the Very Saintly Labors of Ashiata Shiemash was that at that period not only did the duration of the existence of these unfortunates become a little more normal, that is to say, it began to increase, but also what they call the ‘death rate’ also diminished, and at the same time the number of their results manifested for the prolongation of their generation, that is, as they say, their ‘birth rate,’ diminished to at least a fifth ...

“... the said decline in both their death rate and their birth date proceeded because as they approximated to an existence normal for the three-centered beings, they also began to radiate from themselves vibrations responding more closely to the requirements of Great Nature, thanks to which, Nature needed less of those vibrations which are in general obtained from the destruction of the existence of beings.” (B:388)

Although Gurdjieff, through the tales of Beelzebub, often even questions the existence of divine and objective justice (B:1117) given the repeated failures of humans in being able to rid themselves of the consequences of the “organ Kundabuffer,” he is still hopeful that the removal altogether of the consequences of the “organ Kundabuffer” may take place over time. He therefore suggests, like some of his religious predecessors, that the coming of a being of high reason or a cosmic event (B:1118) will help make such a transformation in human affairs a reality.

What is distinctive about Gurdjieff’s (social) psychology is that he does not take for granted the division of human consciousness into the waking consciousness and subconsciousness (and even instinctive unconsciousness) as a permanent and unchangeable fact of human inner life. In his mythologized world-historical narrative, the “organ Kundabuffer” was already removed from human organism at the time of Atlantian civilization, to which Beelzebub descended the first time (B:111). The consequences, though, had already become manifest “in certain subjects” (B:112) in the form of not carrying out “voluntarily any duties taken upon themselves or given them by a superior” (B:112). Here, Gurdjieff considers “laziness” or “disobeying” as consequences of the “organ Kundabuffer.” Labor had become an external imposition, rather than a voluntary action. Gurdjieff suggests that since the possibility of unlimited livelihood for everyone’s

welfare does not and cannot exist on any planet, this results in the struggles for personal gain such that "the prosperity of one is always built on the adversity of many" (B:383). This situation then creates and reestablishes traits such as "cunning,' 'contempt,' 'hate,' 'servility,' 'lying,' [and] 'flattery'" (B:384).

In his diagnosis, one of the important consequences of the "organ Kundabuffer" is the division of society into ethnic/national groups and then into various castes and classes (B:375). Human psyche (B:376) and personality (B:377) become dual, dividing into the conscious and the subconscious realms. Egoism especially leads to and is reinforced by the division of society into classes following the second planetary disaster. And the lowering of conscience to the depths of the subconscious mind is symbolized by the submergence of the continent Atlantis into the depth of the ocean (B:375). This dualism leads, on the one hand, to the submergence of conscience into the depths of subconsciousness (B:359), eventually leading to the degeneration of the divine impulses of Faith, Love, and Hope (B:379), and on the other hand to the rise of Egoism (B:376) and its establishment in the surface realms of everyday waking consciousness, bringing about in time the habits of lying and double-facedness, etc., and the loss of sincerity (B:376). The loss of sincerity and the embracing of lying, encouraged by parental education to make their children adhere to the "realities" of the outside world, lead to the rise of the impulse of deceit (B:378). Subsequently, conscience recedes down to the depths of the subconscious mind:

"Thanks to all this, the conscience which might be in the consciousness of the beings of that planet is, from their earliest infancy, gradually 'driven-back-within,' so that by the time they are grown up the said conscience is already found only in what they call their subconsciousness." (B:378)

The establishment of egoism in the waking consciousness leads to other secondary impulses in the names of "cunning,' 'envy,' 'hate,' 'hypocrisy,' 'contempt,' 'haughtiness' [*sic*], 'servility,' 'slyness,' 'ambition,' [and] 'double-facedness,'" (B:379) among others. Gurdjieff attributes a special "Unique-particular" place to egoism in the genealogy of the maleficent consequences of the "organ Kundabuffer." It is from egoism, which "has swallowed up the whole of" human essence (B:1183) that the other secondary negative being-impulses arise (B:380). And the most immediate result of egoism is hatred (B:1183).

Gurdjieff still believes that despite the establishment of the "maleficent consequences of the organ Kundabuffer" in the waking consciousness of human beings, the formation of divine impulses arising from conscience still continues in them, but only at the depths of their subconscious minds (B:381), evident in the recurring emergence of remorse of conscience in

human beings (B:382). But, painful as it is to experience this genuine impulse, according to Gurdjieff humans have developed many means of “squashing” its awakening. He lists “‘alcoholism,’ ‘cocainism,’ ‘morphinism,’ ‘nicotinism,’ ‘onanism,’ ‘monkism,’ ‘Athenianism,’” (B:382), etc. Wiseacring (B:238), as “one of the chief results of the conditions of the ordinary beings-existence abnormally established there” (B:240), is a fact of life of abnormal human intellectual types, created and reinforced by abnormal conditions of education. The strange disease called “tomorrow” (B:362), a reference to the problem of procrastination, is also an important consequence of the “organ Kundabuffer.” The putting off of the divine duty to know and change oneself, even when its need has been sincerely recognized by the organism, is of no use when it is not performed. Gurdjieff is also particularly emphatic on the relationship of the “organ Kundabuffer” to (abnormal) education (B:816, 1059).

A particular consequence of the “organ Kundabuffer,” that is, of suggestibility through hypnosis with respect to external influences, is the phenomena of mass psychosis as manifested, according to Gurdjieff, in wars, revolts, and revolutions (B:1233–34). Such phenomena, in whose study Gurdjieff was particularly interested (and had intentionally set himself in their midst in the Russian Revolution, World War I, and World War II), arose from impulses such as wanting to “teach others sense” (B:1073), or of sandoor (wishing the death or weakness of others) (B:719), etc., most of whom are rooted in the primary result of egoism, that is hatred.

For Gurdjieff, spiritual pretense is also an “archmaleficent” consequence of the “organ Kundabuffer” (B:694). Despite his profoundly theistic cosmology, Gurdjieff does not hesitate to criticize religious traditions, fake or genuine. The false religiosities are particularly introduced in relationship to the formation of what Gurdjieff calls “Hasnamussian” properties and individuals, who seek fame, power, and riches. They or their religions manifest “egotistic aims, all kinds of confusing fictions and fed them to others under the name of ‘religious teachings’” (B:694). But he also condemns shallow, secular ideologies that undermine genuine religious spiritual values and teachings. Gurdjieff reserves his deepest contempt for Lentrohamsanin,¹¹ the chief culprit in the destruction of all the labours of Ashiata Shiemash (B:394–398). The figure of Ashiata Shiemash is the most

11. Gurdjieff constructs this strange word, it has been claimed, from “Lenin,” “Trotsky,” and perhaps “Stalin.” Given Gurdjieff’s Russian affiliations and roots, this is not hard to believe. Gurdjieff’s nephew was the famous artist who built Stalin’s statue. It has also been unconvincingly claimed that, given their “Georgian” background, Stalin and Gurdjieff were classmates at some point. But Gurdjieff’s Hasnamussian enemy for destroying the legacy of Ashiata Shiemash is perhaps a symbolism for the historical Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) who sacked the roots of the Zoroastrian religion as he conquered Mesopotamia and Persia up to the Oxus river.

innovative of Gurdjieff's mythological constructs and his contempt for Lentrohamsanin is a symbolic expression of his condemnation of secular forces undermining the fruits of labors of genuine prophets. The four kinds of Hasnamuss-individuals (B:406–7, 694) and the "terrible" suffering awaiting them for their acts, especially in terms of the destruction of the results of the labors of Ashiata Shiemash, are particular expressions of Gurdjieff's animosities toward both religious and secular adversaries of genuine spiritual teachings.

It is important to note that for Gurdjieff the consequences of the "organ Kundabuffer" can be acquired both personally and through heredity (B:374). They also apparently lead to gradual change in the organs of perceptions (B:468), given the way in which false imaginations take controls of human inner and outer life. He considers artists as being especially susceptible to crystallizations of the "organ Kundabuffer" (B:512) displaying particularly high levels of impulses of suggestibility and also of "self-enamoredness" (B:512). Gurdjieff was particularly interested in associating with many noted artists of his time; or perhaps the reverse tendency of artists' being interested in and attracted to Gurdjieff and his teaching is noteworthy.

The "Organ Kundabuffer" and Sexuality

For Gurdjieff, the way the "organ Kundabuffer" works is that through its functioning a buffer is created in order not to let a contradiction be experienced (known, felt, or sensed). Its purpose is to prevent the human organism, by means of artificial pleasure or enjoyments of this-worldly life, from experiencing the terror of its own inevitable death (B:1220–1227). And in this regard the role played by sexual pleasure is central to his theory, especially given the centrality of sexual function in general in his whole philosophical system.

The "organ Kundabuffer" creates an organic tendency in the organism toward sexual pleasure as an end in itself, rather than as a means for either procreation or alchemical transubstantiation/self-perfection through abstinence. Sexuality-for-pleasure is not a part of Gurdjieff's cosmological prescriptions. In nature, sexuality arises at specific temporalities for the purpose of procreation—spring time for animals, for instance (B:795). Sexual pleasure as an end in itself is, for Gurdjieff, a chief vice invented by the shepherd Romans (B:793–94), and a central factor in the "maleficent consequences of the organ Kundabuffer":

"Here it might as well be noticed and emphasized that of all the definite cosmic substances which are formed and in consequence are always present in the common presences of your favorites, they well know only this 'being-Exiöehary' which they call 'sperm,' and even masterfully perform with it various kinds of their 'manipulations.' (B:792)

“And your favorites, the beings of the planet Earth, particularly the beings of the present time, do not use these same substances of being-Exioëhary at all consciously, neither for self-perfecting nor for conscious reproduction outside of themselves of new beings similar to themselves. (B:793)

“I must sadly remark that the mentioned depraved inherency already completely fixed in their common presences is for them, particularly for your contemporary favorites, already an ‘automatically acting’ means of destroying to their very root even those impulses which sometimes arise in them from manifestations worthy of three-brained beings and which evolve in them the what is called ‘thirst-for-Being.’ (B:794)

“I repeat, my boy, besides the fact that these favorites of yours, particularly the contemporary, ceased to use these sacred substances inevitably formed in them, consciously for the coating and perfection of their ‘higher-parts’ as well as for the fulfillment of their being-duty foreseen by Nature herself, which consists in the continuation of their species, yet even when this latter does accidentally proceed, they already accept it and regard it as a very great misfortune for themselves, chiefly because the consequences which must proceed from it must for a certain time hinder the free gratification of the multitudinous and multiform vices fixed in their essence.” (B:794)

Elsewhere Gurdjieff writes:

“This impulse is now called ‘pleasure’; and in order to satisfy it they had already begun to exist in a way unbecoming to three-centered beings, namely, most of them gradually began to remove this same sacred being-substance from themselves only for the satisfaction of the said impulse. (B:276)

“Well, then, my boy. Owing to the fact that most of the three-brained beings of the planet Earth thereafter carried out the process of the removal from themselves of this sacred substance—which is constantly formed in them—not at certain periods normally established by Great Nature for beings in accordance with their organization, simply for the purpose of the continuation of their species, and also owing to the fact that most of them ceased to utilize this sacred substance consciously for coating their higher beings bodies, the result was obtained that when they do not remove it from themselves by ways which had then already become mechanical, they naturally must experience a sensation called ‘Sirkliniamen,’ or as your favorites there would say, the state defined by the words ‘out of sorts,’ which state is invariably accompanied by what is called ‘mechanical suffering.’” (B:276–77)

Gurdjieff suggests that sexual pleasure was a particular form of an original “pleasure” impulse that became formed in the human psyche “before the loss of the continent Atlantis” as a result of the various consequences of the properties of the “organ Kundabuffer” (B:276).¹² That sexual pleasure was

"invented" later in its various forms, however, should not detract us from recognizing the central role it occupies in Gurdjieff's theory of human disharmonization in general and its relationship to the functioning of the so-called "organ Kundabuffer" in particular. In order to clarify this point, we need to go back again to Gurdjieff's grand genesis story of the creation of the Earth and its two satellites as a result of the accidental "fall" of the comet Kondoor on the original planet—of its causes and consequences and the catastrophes that ensued. Now we need to decipher the meanings hidden behind this "inexactitude" (of the missing Adam and Eve story) consciously and intentionally planted by Gurdjieff in his mythological Genesis artwork.

Undoubtedly, human sexual center and its function occupy a central place in Gurdjieff's cosmology of human evolution. This we already recognized in our exposition of his philosophy of harmonious universe, and especially in expounding Gurdjieff's psychological scheme of threefold food assimilation processes through which the highest result of ordinary food digestion ("sperm") becomes coated, through conscious labor of self-knowledge and intentional suffering of self-change, into higher Kesdjan and Soul bodies. Harmonious human development and evolution back to God requires, at its foundation, the harmonious operation of the above alchemical process centered on the sexual function. The catastrophes that befell the original planet somehow disharmonized this cosmic evolutionary process.

I have shown above that the mere splitting of a planet-in-formation, contributing to the splitting of the sexes into relatively independent "concentrations," does not signify for Gurdjieff the root cause of the human disharmonization. This makes the process more difficult, more mechanical, but should not necessarily cause a disharmony on such an enduring cosmic scale. Simply more stringent and specific forms of conscious labor and intentional suffering—some of which Gurdjieff himself imaginatively suggests in the First Series by citing stories from the time of the Atlantian Civilization—would compensate for these special circumstances. Even the two subsequent catastrophes of the splitting of the Earth, the splitting of conscious and subconscious minds and submergence of conscience from the former into the latter, on the one hand, and the sand storms of forgetfulness covering up the traces of already discovered meditation techniques of conscious labor and intentional suffering, on the other hand, do not in themselves signify the ultimate cause of the disharmonization. These disasters certainly made life more difficult for human species, creating and

12. The love of gold and precious metals was also a consequence of functionings of the crystallized consequences of the "organ Kundabuffer" (B:324) and was related to the sensation of "envy" (B:324).

obstructing the paths for bringing their fragmented centers back into communication and harmony with one another. But they do not explain *why* the problem originally emerged in the first place.

The key to the riddle must be sought not in the above, but in the fact (as pointed out previously) that the original splitting of the planet took place *accidentally, prematurely, and involved negligent and later circuitous* misrepresentation on the part of the archangelic elders who used the implantation and functioning of Kundabuffer, the organ of hypnosis, to assure “everybody,” even—by implication—“HIS ENDLESSNESS,” in their attempt to resolve an unforeseen and unexpected dilemma. In a less cryptic and more personal language, the cause of the problem lies in the *premature activation of the sexual function* in the life course.

Let us then decrypt Gurdjieff’s cosmological story into the more down-to-earth personal language. The primordial and innocently homogeneous state of asexual identity of the pre-adolescent is suddenly confronted with the accidental collision, given the inevitable “law of falling” and attraction, with the comet of sexual desire. Unforeseeing and unprepared, the elders have not already provided the necessary “cosmic” conditions where either the imminent falling of the desire would be prevented from collapsing on the pre-adolescent organism, or, if this occurs inevitably, the necessary educational and social conditions are not preplanned for the unexpected event.¹³ Rather than acting with patience and pre-meditated behavior, the elders seek to prevent further calamities by resorting to implanting organic feelings of illusive and topsy-turvy stories through all sorts of suggestion and quasi-hypnotic influence to prevent the pre-adolescent from seeing the meaning and reality of the event just experienced.

The accidental splitting of the primordial state of asexuality into two, or perhaps sometimes three, tendencies thereby takes place in an atmosphere of suddenness, fear, ignorance, miseducation, unpreparedness, negligence, impulsiveness, suggestibility, and blind faith. In the absence of proper education and attention by the elders, the sexual disharmony takes root and crystallizes into a constant source of inner anguish, fear, anxiety, fragmentation, and powerlessness in the individual. Harmonious self-development thus frozen and thwarted, and willlessness paramount, the organism becomes vulnerable to all sorts of further cosmic and environmental sources of disharmony from without, leading to the emergence and crystallization of further personal and social consequences emanating from an illusive and pleasure-driven Earthly life. Even when the roots of the problem are understood and removed, the behavioral consequences endure and obstruct efforts at self-perfection.

13. Regarding possible Asiatic early marriage customs to avoid such problems Gurdjieff tells us later in the Second Series—to which I shall return.

In order to illustrate his point about how elders should alternatively react in such circumstances, Gurdjieff constructs a scenario early in the First Series where the spaceship Karnak on which he is traveling with his grandson Hassein, his servant Ahoon, and others, is found to be heading toward an inevitable collapse with an asteroid. Instead of impatient and impulsive behavior, the elder Beelzebub instructs the captain of the ship simply to wait and let the asteroid to pass out of the collision course. Why spend so much energy and fuel in trying to divert a collision, when mere patience mixed with Beelzebub's educational tales to his grandson could fill in the time much more productively? Here, Gurdjieff already has constructed his mythology so as to illustrate in as detail as possible, what patience and care is necessary to train and educate his beloved grandson about the "facts of life" in the Megalocosmos. Like so much else in these tales, Beelzebub employs the "unforeseeingnesses" to instruct Hassein (B:58).

The "organ Kundabuffer" originally implanted at the base of the spinal column represents the hypnotic properties associated with a misdirected, miseducated, and disharmonized sexual center indulging in illusive and pleasure-seeking activity as an end in itself. Human disharmonization is ultimately rooted in the disharmonization of the sexual center and function. To prevent such a disharmonization from threatening the procreative survival of the species, in Gurdjieff's view, the artificial, illusive, and pleasure-seeking organ of sexual manipulation of all kinds is invented and implanted which, coupled with the inherent disharmonious state of the whole organism, instead of improving actually worsens life conditions. Overpopulation, wars and mass psychoses, egoism, hatred, possessiveness, and all sorts of other consequences of the "organ Kundabuffer" then take a life of their own, becoming causes onto themselves.

Overall, stripped from its mythological clothing, Gurdjieff's "organ Kundabuffer" explanation for the disharmonization of human life is based on his psycho-sexual theory of human organic and/or habituating propensity to live in hypnotic trance. What makes human beings externally vulnerable to the influences of cosmic-planetary forces and misfortunes on the one hand, and to misguidance of other humans in society on the other hand, is the particular fragmented selfhood inhabiting their inner life, exacerbated by the disharmonized sexual function at its foundation. The continual fragmentation of selfhood complicated by the unresolved sexual disharmony renders the human individual enslaved to the haphazard functioning of its organism, its habits, weaknesses, etc. Becoming increasingly enslaved to various kinds of habitual behaviors, efforts toward mastery over the whole functioning of the organism repeatedly fail, and as a result the human being becomes vulnerable to all kinds of cosmic or societal control, manipulation, and suggestion.

The three physical, emotional, and intellectual centers of the human organism, instead of acting in union and communication with one another, from early on, and thanks to customary (mis)educational practices, continue to function separately and independently from one another as the organism “grows.” Generally three different human types emerge: the physical types whose center of gravity is in its physical (sexual-moving-instinctive) center, the intellectual type whose center of gravity is in the thinking center, and the emotional type whose center of gravity is in the emotional center. These are all *equally machines* characterized by diverse forms of malfunctioning. The typology becomes more complex when the functioning of various aspects of each center is taken into consideration. While the body mechanically grows, emotions stop growing at the early ages of childhood, remaining essentially untrained. And the formal educational system, at home or at school, simply gives mental knowledge to the person, an empty set of intellectual beliefs. Instead of an “individual,” the human being becomes divided into an undeveloped inner essence, and an ill-formed exterior set of false personalities that take control of the organism subconsciously all the time.

Given such conditions of fragmented selfhood, the human being loses her or his self-determining potentialities, becoming an organism living in daily trance, vulnerable to all kinds of individual or mass hypnosis, suggestion, and external control. Disharmonized within, and unable to do something about it, he or she then contributes to the perpetuation of the same at the societal, planetary, and cosmic, levels.

Chapter Five **THE PRACTICE OF “HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF MAN”**

To make use of people, who display a special interest in an Institute founded by me, for purely personal ends would surely strike those around me as a manifestation of “egoism”, but at the same time the people, who had anything to do with such an Institute established by me, those, namely, whom I had previously mentioned and in whom the predisposition proper to all men,—that of acquiring data and of preparing in their being the soil for the impulse of “objective-conscience” and for the formation of so-called “essential-prudence”—had not yet been entirely atrophied, could, in this way alone, profit by the results of knowledge amassed by me due to exceptional circumstances of my life, and which had regard to nearly all the aspects of reality and objective truth, and thus use them for their own benefit.
—H:24

Practically, what did Gurdjieff propose to be a way out of the primarily inner, but also social, human fragmentation and hypnotic slavery? In this chapter I will present a commonly held account—based on what has been reported in Gurdjieff’s (especially B:1185–1238, *Meetings*, and *Herald*), and Ouspensky’s (1949) writings—of what practical strategies Gurdjieff proposed and undertook in favor of advancing his project of harmonious human development.

Despite aspiring to help all to liberate themselves from inner enslavement, Gurdjieff believed that universal liberation of humanity as a whole is unlikely for practical reasons, even though theoretically possible. Many cosmic-planetary and social circumstances limit such a prospect. Inner and outer crystallizations of the consequences of the “organ Kundabuffer” set continuing obstacles on the path. But this does not mean that *individual* efforts are futile. Dedicated persons who seek a way out *can awaken* to the hypnotic sleep of everyday life in favor of *becoming* human and not just a “man in quotation marks” (B:1227).

According to Gurdjieff, throughout centuries three traditions appeared in the East to deal with human trance and inner slavery in favor of human awakening and self-mastery. They each concentrated on one or another of the separately functioning centers of the human organism, often in retreat from everyday life (in caves, deserts, forests, or monasteries), to pursue their aim. The fakir focused on conscious labors and intentional sufferings of the physical center as pathways toward self-control over one’s organism. The way of the monk was that of conscious and intentional emotional suffering and transformation, and the yogi pursued conscious and intentional efforts focusing on the intellectual center to reach enlightenment.

What good is it to gain at times superior mastery of one or another center of one’s organism in retreat from everyday life, Gurdjieff wondered, when inadequate time remained for developing other centers, such that upon returning to everyday busy life one again lost awareness and control of oneself? While acknowledging the contributions of the three traditions, therefore, Gurdjieff advocated a “fourth way” that combined useful elements from all the three traditions, and pursued simultaneous developments of all the three centers amid, and not in retreat from, everyday life. In his view, this strategy was more effective and efficient, since anyone serious enough to take up the task could meet the challenge, pursuing one’s everyday life and livelihood *while* working on harmoniously developing all the three centers of the organism in relation to one another.

Personal Self-Knowledge and Change

Gurdjieff believed that Earthly “three-brained beings” are not born with harmoniously functioning centers; they are born with blank rolls of tape on which any impressions can be recorded as they grow up. It is the conditions of daily life that prevent humans from seeking self-perfection—circumstances which were primarily established by humans themselves.

Spiritual teachings have always been available to all those who seek. The problem is that people do not often realize they are asleep, a machine, or in prison. They take their “freedom” for granted. Although the possibility of inner “liberation” exists for all, practically only a few will have the necessary determination, and can endure the difficulty, of liberating themselves.

The first step for the one wishing to "wake up" and step in the path of seeking self-mastery, then, is to realize that one is asleep in the first place. The first condition for a prisoner to seek freedom is to realize that he or she is in prison. Many do not realize, or take up, this initial challenge.

Those liberated in the past have left traces and messages throughout human culture in order to influence future generations, but not everyone can distinguish these "work" influences from the normal "life" influences, even if they are directly told about them. The forces of life are strong and exert enormous hypnotic influence over those who, even in flashes of experience, realize the irrationality of ordinary life. Those who do realize this, however, upon seeking an answer discover sooner or later that they are not alone—that there have been others before or around them who seek the same answers. It is much easier to use the experience of other ex-prisoners who have somehow found a way out, than try to escape alone. Alone, though rarely possible, a person can do very little, Gurdjieff emphasized; for this a *special school* is necessary. And to find such a school, the seeker must try to find the ones who have already advanced on the path of seeking self-mastery. When they find a genuine teacher through a maze of would-be and false ones, then serious work may begin. The decision to embark on the journey must be a decisive one, however, for the effort is demanding. The teaching requires the willingness of the pupil, based on a clear understanding of the goals and paths of the journey. There can be no other way other than through the pupil's own work upon her/himself, but this must be done in conjunction with the efforts of other "workers," and under the guidance of a teacher. For this, a school is necessary, a school in which those more advanced act as teachers in helping others.

The teacher, who has already experienced work in company with other "workers," senses the obligation to directly help others to accomplish their task of self-perfection. The teacher's seeking financial resources for the school—the so-called "material question"—are of course important in such work, but are taken for granted for students. Only those students are accepted who are "householders." They must already be engaged in and have acquired their own means of livelihood in the ordinary day to day life. Gurdjieff generally limited his students to those who had already accomplished their livelihood and careers—no matter how modest—as "householders" who have values that enable them to support others.

Three lines of work take place in Gurdjieff's school: the first and the foremost precondition is the work on oneself; second, working in company and for the benefit of others who work on themselves; and third working for the benefit of the school and teaching as a whole, as represented by the teacher. The teacher, of course, acts as such only during a definite period in the maturation of their pupils, and eschews any long-term attachment of pupils to her/himself; in fact, as soon as pupils reach a certain stage of

learning, the teacher consciously makes an effort to “let them go” in order to become teachers themselves. In addition, teachers adopt the pedagogical tool of teaching by indirect methods, of not providing answers to the pupils ready made, but providing them as much as their development allows and requires, so they can develop their own faculties of creative and analytical thinking—providing them only with “leather” so they can make their own shoes, as Gurdjieff used to tell his pupils.

Activities of such a school consist of a series of exercises that aim at the cultivation, development, and harmonious blending of the three physical, emotional, and intellectual centers of each pupil: a series of movements, dances, exercises, and various combinations of the three. Strong emphasis is put on studying, learning, and practically experiencing at the level, and relevant to the type, of one’s own organism the Laws of Three and Seven governing the universe. Before bringing about any changes to the organism, the organism has to be rigorously, and “objectively,” studied.

The school’s method is claimed to be scientific. One begins with *self-observation* of one’s own organism, taking note of its functionings as they are, not as one would like them to be. One tries at first to understand what behaviors fall under which, and what aspect, of the threefold centers, classifying and describing them, but not interpreting or changing them. To pursue this process of self-observation, certain exercises are offered. Depending on one’s type, the exercises may differ; the trajectory of development for different human types also differs according to what their imbalance is in each different case. Then there are exercises that combine two or more of the functions together for observing the human organism in operation as a whole at any cross-section of time. In all these attempts at self-observation one must not “identify” with the act, remaining objective to the organism’s behavior. The school provides conditions in which various physical, emotional, and/or intellectual functions of the organism become active and visible, and then observed.

In time, one must move beyond self-observation, to *self-remembering*. In self-observation, attention is directed at oneself as an object. In self-remembering, the attention is directed at oneself as both object *and* subject. It requires a simultaneous awareness of oneself as the observer and the observed. Actually, the seed of self-remembering is sown in the process of self-observation itself, for self-observation inherently involves the splitting of oneself into a self that observes and one that is observed. Self-remembering produces sensations of oneself as a whole, totally new and shocking to the organism. It practically shows how forgetful one often is—how fragmented and multiple one’s selves are. Amid the inner legion of one’s selves and forgetful “I”s, how can one re-“member” who one aspires oneself to be, one that represents one’s “true” and higher selves? How can one remember one or another self? Flashes of self-remembering through

repeated practices and exercises, leading to more frequent remembering of the observing self as the seat of a future master self, become more frequent. Cross-sectional experiences of self-remembering at the moment gradually grow into longitudinal and objective observations of one's entire life. Momentary observational and remembering snapshots increasingly become a motion picture of lifelong understanding and remembering of oneself.

Self-remembering while observing one's own organism in turn enables the person to take a further, third, step and practice *external considering*, of being aware of and considerate toward others while remaining aware of oneself. Increasing self-understanding helps one better observe, remember, and understand others. This is an important step in Gurdjieff's fourth way, for it helps the person take into account not only the personal but also the societal and environmental contexts that shape one's and others lives. To understand oneself, it is necessary to avoid "internal considering" and become considerate of others and the interactions one has with them.

Increased awareness of one's organism—presently and in one's life-course, in private and in presence of others—and its physical, emotional, or mental functionings, disharmonies, misused center energies, habituations, psychological buffers, etc., leads in time to the experiencing and heightened awareness of various inner contradictions in the organism. One begins not only to observe, but to sense, feel, and understand the multiplicity of selves lurking behind the apparent singularity of the "I"—and becomes more attentive to their inner contradictions and conflicts. *Awareness of various buffers* in the organism, which have created blind-spots in one's self-understanding, soon, through gaining ever deeper causal insights, leads to an awareness of principal and fundamental contradictions and finally of what Gurdjieff calls the "*chief feature*" (Ouspensky 1949:224–30) of one's disharmonized organism. Awareness of this chief feature of oneself can be one of the most painful, and joyful, moments. It is difficult for a person to find this out on their own, however. Often the teacher's and others' help is necessary, for they are able to see the chief feature more readily than the person her/himself. However, even when one is told about it by others, the realization *by* oneself does not automatically follow. Only when the organism is ready does it actually begin to recognize its chief feature.

If the chief feature is properly identified and the ensuing contradiction resolved, one can experience a momentous sense of self-liberation, as this chief feature has been the most fundamental force causing the fragmentation and disharmony of one's individuality. From then on, various exercises and procedures are devised in order to resolve and eradicate various inner buffers that have prevented the harmonious cross-functions of the three centers. In time, and through constant effort, then, one can arrive at a point where the imbalances of one's inner organism give way to more harmonious blending of the results and functionings of the three centers and their parts.

Human sexuality, for Gurdjieff, is meant to serve only two purposes: proactively as a means and condition for procreation, and preventively, as a means for strengthening one's will and liberating one's creative energies and powers. Sexual energy is the highest and most refined form of human creative energy and, as such, its proper use has significant implications for human creative and productive activity. Gurdjieff holds the view that the second path resembles a mode of inner impregnation in which new bodies (or selves) are born inside that can in time bear extraordinary results. Such use of human sexual energy for reaching higher states and impregnating higher bodies in oneself has been the goal of all genuine spiritual traditions.

No matter what human type one belongs to, seven phases of development are identified for a seeker. The physical type is assigned number 1, the emotional type, number 2, the intellectual type, number 3. Working on all three centers involves three interrelated kinds of work. Type 4 is at the stage where the three centers have arrived at a relatively balanced, though reversible and still independently functioning, state resulting from *conscious labors* for all-round self-knowledge attainment. In this type the material conditions for the development of a "Soul" and permanent "I" begin to appear. Then an intense process of *intentional suffering* to transform the organism begins. In type 5, the higher physical body is formed, especially by its now appropriate sex-center functioning. In type 6, born inside the higher physical body, the astral (body-Kesdjan, or higher emotional) body is established. In type 7, born within the astral body, Soul or the higher mental or Divine Body is crystallized. Type 8, or Causal Body (Ouspensky 1949:40–44), has itself been the guide and now a permanent product of the intentional sufferings to establish the three higher bodies. In type 8, the distinctions among the three centers have eroded such that a singular, "objective consciousness"—in which unconscious, subconscious, and waking conscious minds are fused—is forever crystallized. Only this type can claim to have a *permanent* "Soul" and "I." It is indivisible, truly an "individual," and alone can claim "I am," "I wish," "I know," and "I do."

Knowing and Changing Broader Society

Is there a social agenda in Gurdjieff's teaching? Does he make any efforts to develop, alongside his psychological theory and practice of human harmonization, any strategies for bringing about broader social harmony?

Gurdjieff's approach to social change may be studied from two angles: mechanical (involutionary) and conscious/intentional (evolutionary).

As is, human society for Gurdjieff is as much a mechanical and automatic process as humanity itself. It is a functional part of the organic life on Earth, and plays a mechanical role in providing the conditions for possible evolution of some individuals. According to him, to prematurely disrupt the natural balance of this social mechanism, established

throughout the centuries, is to do a disservice to the cause of human evolution. When narrating the first journey of Beelzebub to Earth, for instance, Gurdjieff tells the mythological tale of a certain young, well-intending, but still premature, companion of Beelzebub who—having descended to the Island of Atlantis and seen the inequalities and injustices prevailing there—instigated a revolution against the Atlantian king. However, the experience of the revolution soon revealed that disturbing and abolishing the habitually established processes of social and political life previously operating mechanically in Atlantis in fact hurt the social equilibrium. Eventually, it became necessary for Beelzebub to personally intervene and devise a tactic whereby the populace became fed up with the new regime and actually sought the reestablishment of the old order.

Such disdain for "revolutionary" propaganda and activity on the part of Gurdjieff, as expressed through Beelzebub's tales to his grandson, generally highlight Gurdjieff's static view of social history in which specific civilizations and nations rise and fall while retaining humanity's inherently unchanging social psychological makeup. In the First Series, Beelzebub also presents his theories about the social psychological nature of particular civilizations he has visited across millennia in such a way that the original characteristics of the founders of each society—Greeks as fishermen interested in philosophizing, Romans as shepherds indulged in sex, Americans as the land of growing dollar bills, Germans as medicine/poison manufacturers, French as decent religious people wrongly identified with the small band of international tourists regularly visiting their capital, etc.—are retained almost intact and generalized over the whole population.

Gurdjieff's observation that human history has hitherto been operating mechanically, however, should not be misunderstood to indicate that he does not believe in the possibility of a conscious and intentional social existence for humans that is conducive to their spiritual evolution. It is true that he tries to understand the failures of many religious figures who sought, as part of their spiritual teaching, to change surrounding social conditions. Gurdjieff's mythological hero and prophet, Ashiata Shiemash, sought and for a while even succeeded in establishing social conditions whereby all differences in casts and classes were abolished and true understanding and equality were established across Asia. But shortly after the Ashiatian teaching, most of what he had achieved was forgotten beyond the third generation such that today no one even knows such a major prophet even existed. It is true that Gurdjieff recognizes such efforts in the past against mechanical social conditions, and is aware of their failures; but in his teaching there is no naturally or godly preordained obstacle against the *possibility* of an ideal human society more conducive to the evolution of human spirituality. If there has been a failure to create such social conditions, it is basically—and Gurdjieff emphasizes this throughout the

First Series—due to the fault of human beings themselves. Gurdjieff's teaching, in other words, is not sociologically pessimistic. His view that only some individuals can evolve spiritually is a pragmatic statement regarding the reality of human affairs, rather than one admitting inherent limits to the potential of human social evolution as a whole.

It is noteworthy that in Gurdjieff's "two river" analogy at the end of the First Series he even makes an "historical" observation that the division of the flow of human life into the two mechanical and conscious rivers was not preordained, but emerged after a so-called "Tikliamishian civilization" (allegedly where Turkestan is today) prior to which human society flowed in *one and the same river* of life. The construction of this historical possibility, even in a mythological guise, represents a sociological perspective in Gurdjieff that recognizes at least the possibility of conscious and intentional social conduct on the part of human beings. Gurdjieff writes:

After all I have said I consider it necessary to say and even to emphasize further that all the historical data which have reached contemporary people and which have chanced to become known also to me, namely, the historical data concerning what really did occur in the past in the life of people, and not just those data invented by contemporary what are called learned being, chiefly from among the Germans—with which histories all the rising generation is stuffed almost everywhere on the Earth—clearly show that people of former epochs did not divide into two streams of life, but that all flowed along in a single river.

The general life of mankind has been divided into two streams since the time of what is called the "Tikliamishian civilization," which directly preceded the Babylonian civilization.

It was just from then on that there gradually began to be and ultimately finally established that organization of the life of mankind which, as every sane-thinking man ought to constate, can now flow more or less tolerably only if people are divided into masters and slaves. (B:1235)

In the last statement above, Gurdjieff is not evoking the classical form of slave society as an alternative to the present society. He has a different sense of "master and slave" relation in mind that, for other reasons, may still be considered controversial (and to which I shall return later when evaluating Gurdjieff's teaching). But to clarify what Gurdjieff means by an alternative "master and slave" order of society, let us continue reading his passage:

Although to be either masters or slaves in a collective existence among children, like ourselves, of the COMMON FATHER, is unworthy of man, yet thanks at the present time to the conditions existing which have already been thoroughly fixed in the process of the collective life of people, the source of which lies in remote antiquity, we must be reconciled to it and accept a compromise that, according to impartial reasoning, should

correspond both to our own personal welfare, and also at the same time not be contrary to the commandments specially issuing to us people from the "Prime-Source-of-Everything-Existing."

Such a compromise, I think, is possible if certain people consciously set themselves, as the chief aim of their existence, to acquire in their presences all the corresponding data to become masters among those around them similar to themselves.

Proceeding from this and acting according to the wise saying of ancient times affirming that "in order to be in reality a just and good altruist it is inevitably required first of all to be an out and out egoist," and also profiting by the good sense given us by Great Nature, each one of us must set for his chief aim to become in the process of our collective life a master.

But not a master in that sense and meaning which this word conveys to contemporary people, namely, one who has many slaves and much money, handed down, in most cases, by inheritance, but in the sense that a given man, thanks to his, in the objective sense, devout acts towards those around him—that is to say, acts manifested by him according to the dictates of his pure Reason alone, without the participation of those impulses which in him as in all people are engendered from the mentioned consequences of the properties of the maleficent organ Kundabuffer—acquires in himself that something which of itself constrains all those about him to bow before him and with reverence carry out his order. (B:1235–36)

In other words, Gurdjieff has a kind of *spiritual* "master and slave" relationship in mind that he considers to be a "compromise" arrangement for a historical situation where the world at large has already been fixed along exploitative social divisions. Given this "realistic" and "objective" posture in Gurdjieff's conceptual arsenal, it is clear that he leans on the more moderate goal of bringing about social change incrementally through individual teaching and learning within the framework of a system of transitive spiritual schooling (amid an otherwise divided social life) directed by a more advanced teacher. This would be preferable to taking grand steps of radical social, political, or economic transformation in existing society to bring about social conditions similar to the ideal, ancient "single river" arrangements that according to his mythology existed before.

Regarding the possibility that such an ideal society, rather than the existing or the "compromise" arrangement Gurdjieff mentions above, may exist, one may consider his mythological story of Ashiata Shiemash, the ancient long-forgotten prophet who succeeded in bringing about harmony to the inner life of human beings as well as their social organization:

"Well then, my boy, at the time when the results of the Very Saintly Labors of the Essence-loving Ashiata Shiemash had already begun to blend with the process of what is called their 'inner' and 'outer' being-existence, and when

thanks to this, data for the Divine impulse conscience, surviving in their subconsciousness, gradually began to share in the functioning of their 'waking-consciousness,' then the being-existence both personal and reciprocal began to proceed on this planet also, almost as it does on the other planets of our great Universe on which three-brained beings exist.

"These favorites of yours also then began to have relations towards each other only as towards the manifestations varying in degree of a UNIQUE COMMON CREATOR and to pay respect to each other only according to the merits personally attained by means of "being-Partkdolg-duty,' that is, by means of personal conscious labors and intentional sufferings.

"That is why, during that period, there ceased to exist there the said two chief maleficent forms of their ordinary existence, namely, their separate independent communities and the division of themselves in these communities into various casts or classes.

"At that time, also, there upon your planet, all the three-brained beings began to consider themselves and those like themselves merely as beings bearing in themselves particles of the emanation of the Sorrow of our COMMON FATHER CREATOR.

"And all this then so happened because when the actions of the data of the Divine being-impulse began to participate in the functioning of their ordinary waking-consciousness, and the three-brained beings began manifesting themselves towards each other, solely in accordance with conscience, the consequence was that masters ceased to deprive their slaves of freedom, and various power-possessing beings of their own accord surrendered their unmerited rights, having become aware by conscience and sensing that they possessed and occupied these rights and positions not for the common welfare but only for the satisfaction of their various personal weaknesses, such for instance as 'vanity,' 'self-love,' 'self-calming,' and so on.

"Of course, at that period also, there continued to be all kinds of chiefs, directors and 'advisor-specialists,' who became such chiefly from difference of age and from what is called 'essence-power,' just as there are everywhere on all planets of the Universe on which there breed three-brained beings of varying degrees of self-perfecting, and they then became such, neither by heredity right nor by election, as was the case before this blissful Ashiatian epoch and as again afterwards became and even till now continues to be the case.

"All these chiefs, directors and advisors then became such in accordance with the objective merits they personally acquired, and which could be really sensed by all the beings around them." (B:384-85)

Gurdjieff's ideal society, in other words, is also devoid of "national," caste, class, inheritance, etc., privileges. It is a society that individual freedoms are recognized, while mutual respect for one another based on the degree of their conscious labors and intentional sufferings toward achieving

individual self-knowledge and mastery is paramount. The ironic twist in Gurdjieff's mystical vision of society based on the rule of re-awakened individual conscience in determining the waking state, however, is that the very cause of destruction of the Ashiatian ideal society and his visions, designs, and actions was what we may today call a utopist (B:390–410).

Using a compound term invented to convey the projects pursued by historical figures such as Lenin and Trotsky, Gurdjieff constructs the prototypical "Lentrohamsanin" individual as a personality type of a utopist who seeks to bring about an ideal society without considerations for the transformation necessary in the inner life of human beings. In other words, although some of the goals in Gurdjieff's utopia may be the same as those of the modern social reformists and utopists, different is the path through which such a harmonious society may be achieved. For Gurdjieff social change at large can be brought about, if at all, only through inner labors of self-knowledge and change, whereas for the utopist, engineering the outer life is itself considered to be sufficient in reaching the idea society.

Lentrohamsanin signifies for Gurdjieff an individual who seeks freedom and equality in outer life in such a way that his (or her) own inner life may remain diametrically opposed to what he or she preaches and does in outer life. Inventing another broader term, "Hasnamuss," for an individual (of which Lentrohamsanin was a specific type) Gurdjieff portrays the "Nalooosnian-spectrum-of-impulses" (B:405) motivating their inner life as follows:

- (1) Every kind of depravity, conscious as well as unconscious
- (2) The feeling of self-satisfaction from leading others astray
- (3) The irresistible inclination to destroy the existence of other breathing creatures
- (4) The urge to become free from the necessity of actualizing the being-efforts demanded by Nature
- (5) The attempt by every kind of artificiality to conceal from others what in their opinion are one's physical defects
- (6) The calm self-contentment in the use of what is not personally deserved
- (7) The striving to be not what one is. (B:406)

Gurdjieff's laments about the "culprit" responsible for the destruction of the Ashiatian social experiment must not detract our attention from the fact that there is a more straightforward sociological consideration in Gurdjieff's teaching as well. With Gurdjieff, the ideal society is achievable through different means, i.e., through an ideal "priest-organization" (B:389) state for society, not as it is understood today but as it allegedly existed in "ancient times." The main difference between Gurdjieff's mystical utopianism with that of conventional utopists seems to be emanating, again, from his

conception of human life as essentially and primarily a mechanical apparatus of the cosmic Trogoautoegocratic system. Human beings, as they are born, are not really “humans” yet, in other words, to be entitled automatically to equal rights and positions in society. They are still “man in quotation marks” (B:1227). It is their conscious labors and intentional strivings for self-knowledge and self-transformation toward achieving higher-being-bodies that entitles them to such rights and responsibilities. Social mechanics and social idealism are therefore intricate parts of Gurdjieff’s sociological imagination.

Gurdjieff’s Life and “Harmonious Development of Man”

How should one embark on the path of “harmonious human development”? In considering the practical dimension of Gurdjieff’s teaching, it is important to note that Gurdjieff uses his own autobiography as a highly colorful and detailed landscape to advance what he regards as the practical knowledges and skills necessary to advance the aims of his teaching. For this reason, in what follows I will reconstruct his autobiography using his primary texts¹ in order to shed further light on the practical sources and implications of, and challenges posed by, his teaching.

The aim here is not to “factually verify” Gurdjieff’s autobiographical account. Whether a particular event in Gurdjieff’s life corresponds with an actual historical event—the cattle plague he cites in his childhood memoirs, for example—is not an issue for my purpose here, so long as the pieces of Gurdjieff’s life are more or less convincingly fitted together to reconstruct the story of his life *as he envisioned it*. And they do seem to fit, as far as Gurdjieff’s intentions are concerned, and despite the significant fragmentation to which he subjects the information about his life.

Gurdjieff’s life can be traced along three *preparatory, search, and teaching* periods. In the outline that follows, Gurdjieff’s early preparatory life is situated in the general historical and geographical context of the second half of the nineteenth century in which he was born and raised. Then, Gurdjieff’s account of his responsible life, during which he discovered, gathered, and systematized (together with other members of a group he called “Seekers of Truth”) various fragments of mystical teachings, is traced.

1. The material presented in this section are based on a more detailed accounting of Gurdjieff’s autobiography as presented in the Appendix. Gurdjieff’s main account of his life can be found in the Second Series, titled *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. Aside from the deeper allegorical meanings etched by Gurdjieff himself onto the account of his early life, elements whose significance can be understood in light of the body of his writings and life as a whole, the book highlights some of the most important events that shaped Gurdjieff’s personality during his preparatory age. Other important autobiographical sources about Gurdjieff’s life are his *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, *Life Is Real Only Then, When “I Am,”* and especially *The Herald of Coming Good*.

The later, more familiar and independently documented, period of Gurdjieff's life during which he systematically sought to spread, principally in the West, what he had found during his previous searches, is presented.

1. *The Preparatory Period (1872?–1888)*

Of course nothing was easier for Gurdjieff than to indicate the date and place of his birth in the thousands of pages of writings he left behind. But he did not. Gurdjieff left sufficient clues for his posterity, in other words, to indicate that he did not wish to impart straightforwardly certain information about his life and ideas to his followers. This is perhaps most illustrated by the confusion that still reigns in the Gurdjieff Studies about the *date* (and let us here add perhaps for the first time) the *place*, of his birth.

There has been uncertainty among Gurdjieff followers and scholars regarding the date of his birth.² The controversy has been narrowed down to three dates, 1866, 1872, and 1877. James Moore, a widely acknowledged biographer of Gurdjieff, who has advocated for the accuracy of the earliest date, provides a detailed (though provisional) chronology of Gurdjieff's life which, according to Moore's own account, leads him to suggest that in the year 1888–1889 Gurdjieff was already set out on his archaeological expeditions to distant regions with other members of "Seekers of Truth" (Moore 1991:321). Based on Moore's date, Gurdjieff must have been about twenty-two to twenty-three years old at this time. However, it is certainly the case that according to Gurdjieff's own statement in his only autobiographical account (*Meetings with Remarkable Men*), he was at this time still experiencing as a young boy the early events (the Yezidi circle, Tartar man's death, etc.) that led him eventually to his more serious expeditions in his adult life. A precise date for this stage of Gurdjieff's life is in fact provided by Gurdjieff himself in his text when he writes:

Certain strong impressions somehow deeply imprint themselves on one's memory. I remember even now how I racked my brains to find the best way to fit in the figures of the year 1888. (M:65)

2. All of Gurdjieff's primary writings have been published under the supervision of Gurdjieff's senior pupils. The publisher's information on the 1950 edition of the First Series of Gurdjieff's writings indicated his birth year as 1872; the second, 1992, edition suggests the different date 1866. The publisher of the Second (1985 edition) and Third (1991 edition) Series of Gurdjieff's writings introduce his birth year as 1877. The Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data *in the same editions* suggest 1872 as Gurdjieff's birth date. Paul Beekman Taylor, in his *G. I. Gurdjieff: A New Life* (2008), provides a photocopy of Gurdjieff's German passport (p. 205), on which his birth date appears as 1877. Taylor himself acknowledges that "... the crossed "7" can be confused easily with a "2"). Taylor goes on (pp. 14–18) to dwell in some detail on the problem of Gurdjieff's date of birth and how it remains a "bone of contention" mainly on the choices of dates ranging from 1866 to 1877 (14). Therein, Taylor finds himself reluctantly inclined to side with the date of 1866 rather than 1877 (17).

Gurdjieff was referring to his having been given a small craft job by his neighbor to draw a sign for the door of his neighbor's house for the occasion of the neighbor's niece's wedding the following day. Most of the early events that began Gurdjieff's questions and curiosities about life is reported by him in the same chapter (on Bogachevsky) of his book to have taken place around the same time. If we follow Gurdjieff's own memory here, and consider Moore's proposed date for Gurdjieff's birth (1866), Gurdjieff must have been doing such a craft job for the neighbor when he was a relatively grown-up young man in his adolescence or early 20s. Obviously, Moore's correlation of Gurdjieff's full-blown expeditions with other members of "Seekers of Truth" to this date is in error—which makes his general chronological arrangements for Gurdjieff's early life problematic as a whole. The alternative proposed date of 1877 for his birth date, offered by others, also seems unlikely because that would indicate his age to be eleven in 1888, that is the age at which Gurdjieff's family had just moved from Alexandropol to Kars (M:41). Gurdjieff's account in the same chapter (M:61–62), however, indicates that his family had already been settled in Kars for rather some time. The date 1872 seems, therefore, to be a more reliable date for Gurdjieff's birth date, which would render his age about 16 in 1888.

But, for the purpose of this study, the 'reliability' of Gurdjieff's date in terms of its facticity is immaterial, since the more important message that arises from his autobiographical writing is that he intentionally withheld the most basic information about his life. 1872 seems to be Gurdjieff's intended date for his birth day as far as his own narrative is concerned.

More puzzling than Gurdjieff's birth date perhaps is the fact that the almost unanimous information about his *birthplace* does not correlate with Gurdjieff's own autobiographical account. In *Meetings*, Gurdjieff suggests that "A year or two" (M:40) after his father (and his family) had arrived and settled in the Armenian town of Alexandropol a devastating cattle plague suddenly destroyed his father's livestock. He explicitly indicates his age at the time to have been seven. This does not correlate with the notion that Gurdjieff was born in Alexandropol, which is often asserted in Gurdjieff scholarship, and is even stated as such in the copy of his German passport reproduced in Taylor (2008: 205). Based on Gurdjieff's account (M:40) his father had settled in Georgia before separating from his brothers and moving to Armenia (Alexandropol). Although Gurdjieff's father's Greek ancestry had made a long move over the centuries from Byzantium to the heart of Turkey and later to the eastern shores of the Black Sea (to the environs of the town later called Gumush Khaneh), "not long before the last big Russo-Turkish war"³ (M:40), that is, not long before the Crimean War of 1853–56, they had settled in Georgia. It is more likely, then, that Gurdjieff's father grew up and married his Armenian wife in Georgia,

perhaps in Tiflis (present Tbilisi), and that Gurdjieff himself was born there as a first child.⁴

Gurdjieff was already five or six years old when his family moved to settle in Armenia—"a year or two later," at age seven, witnessing the first calamity befallen to his father's cattle-raising career. Having lost his fortune as a result of the cattle plague that may have taken place in 1879,⁵ and not succeeding in his new lumber workshop in Alexandropol during the following four years, in 1883 Gurdjieff's father began to move his carpentry occupation, and soon his whole family, to Kars, the previously Ottoman-controlled fortress-town which was then being rapidly reconstructed by the Russians. At the time of this move to Kars, Gurdjieff was already eleven years old.

Gurdjieff's preparatory life, therefore, can be traced along three residential phases:⁶ Georgia (likely Tiflis) period from birth to age five or six (1872–1877/8); Alexandropol period from age five or six to age eleven (1877/8–1883); Kars period from age eleven until sixteen (1883–1888).⁷

3. It may be helpful to consider here the broad historical context in which Gurdjieff recounts his early life. The late nineteenth century was a period of intensified colonial expansion, increasing inter-imperialist rivalry, and widespread archaeological expeditions carried out by various European governments and citizens in the Near, Central, and Far East. Russian, Ottoman, and British rivalry had considerable impact on the lives of indigenous populations living in the Caucasus region. Despite Russia's defeat of Iran ("Persia") in three wars between 1804 and 1828, leading to Russia's annexation of Georgia and parts of Azerbaijan and Armenia, further expansion of the Russian empire was kept in check by an alliance of the British with the Ottoman and the French government. The Crimean War of 1853–1856, in the course of which the British and the French (and later the Sardinia-Piedmont) armies supported the Ottomans against Russia, involved significant hardships for and persecutions of the region's population. During the mid 1860s, the Armenian city of Gyumri (later renamed Alexandropol) had become a predominantly military town, given its location along Russia's western border with the Ottoman Empire. In 1877, following a declaration of war on the Ottomans by Russia, the Russian army, headed locally by an Armenian General, crossed the border into the regions under the Ottoman jurisdiction and after months of severe clashes successfully brought under Russian control new regions that included the town of Kars. Both Alexandropol and the nearby town of Kars had by then remained a microcosm of ancient ethnic diversity found almost in the whole wider Transcaucasian region. The population of these towns included Russians, Turks, Armenians, Aisors (Assyrians), Tartars, Persians (including Azeris), Yezidis, and Kurds, among many others.

4. The possible connection of "Gurdjieff" as a family name with Georgia as a place of residence is obvious here.

5. Moore (1991) claims to have evidence that the cattle plague to which Gurdjieff refers in his text actually took place in 1873. This index is then used as the basis for building his chronology of Gurdjieff's biography. However, Moore does not provide sources for such evidence in his text. Taylor (2008) cites other sources indicating that other cattle plagues took place in 1877 and 1884.

6. Gurdjieff's reference to "Alexandropol and Kars, the towns where my family lived during my childhood" (M:33) does not necessarily contradict the fact that Gurdjieff's family had also lived in Georgia previously, before he turned five or six.

7. Gurdjieff's father decided later in life to move his family back to Alexandropol (M:200) and stayed there until his death in 1917.

The confusion over Gurdjieff's birth date and place may appear to be trivial matter for the reader unfamiliar with Gurdjieff's teaching techniques as far as the practical aspects of his efforts toward the "harmonious development of man" are concerned. However, as I shall demonstrate in the following three chapters, such a confusion (over the most basic data about his biography) was an example of a whole series of puzzles, signposts, and difficulties Gurdjieff deliberately created for his pupils, readers, and posterity, for specific reasons that are inseparable from the method and aims of his teaching. As Gurdjieff later discovered about the nature and purpose of "ancient art," "lawful inexactitudes" consciously and intentionally placed in artwork (and in this case, in his own writings) play significant roles in the transmission of important information to future generations.

Gurdjieff's father, a Pontic Greek, was a popular storyteller and bard (or "Ashokh"⁸) by interest and upbringing, and a cattle raiser by trade; Gurdjieff's mother was Armenian. Citing the roles played by various "remarkable men" in his life, beginning with his Ashokh father, Gurdjieff emphasized how from very early in his childhood his father intentionally inculcated in him various senses of fearlessness, curiosity, tolerance of hardships and pain, creativity and industry, self-reliance, and search for answers to questions taken for granted by others. Especially important among these factors were his father's old tales from the remote past, including the story of Gilgamesh, that an astonished Gurdjieff discovered years later to be accurate to the detail upon excavation of new information in the ruins of the old city of Babylon. Gurdjieff's habit of "traveling" to his private tutors and teachers in near or distant towns must have played an important role in inculcating in his personality an aggressive and proactive appetite for learning—crucial for his later "travels" and "expeditions."

What seems to have influenced the young Gurdjieff most deeply later on, however, was his encounters with death. Deaths of two of his closest relatives, his paternal grandmother and especially his favorite sister (M:60) seem to have supplied the crucial "accidental" shocks to Gurdjieff's sensitive personality in search of spiritual and inexplicable events. His indignant and astonished witnessing of a Tartar man's coming back to life from death (apparently, from a case of severe Mercury poisoning resulting from misedication of the injured man)—and subsequent ceremony according to the local Tartar customs to (unjustly and superstitiously) put the poor man "back to death" to dispel the evil in him (M:70–72)—seems to have been among other events that left a strong thirst in him to search for rational answers to the problem of death and the purpose of human life.

8. "Ashokh" in Azeri ("Ashikh") or Persian ("Ashekh") means "lover," a reference to divine love, and used as a name for traditional local bards who often play instruments and sing traditional songs.

Gurdjieff's own near-death experience on an artillery range during childhood as a result of a quarrel with his classmate Karpenko over adolescent romantic jealousy left him instead feeling remorse of conscience and pity, with a deep sense of himself as well as wonder and curiosity about human life (and death), its purpose, and its significance on Earth (M:200–207). His physical upbringing that was carried out under the strict supervision of his father, his intellectual education in sciences and religion which was guided by Dean Borsh (who was the head of the local Russian military cathedral and school), and his emotional experiences, in association with an appointed teacher (Bogachevsky), of various events related to religious and supernatural questions, left an unquenchable thirst in Gurdjieff to find an answer to his spiritual questions. These recollections clearly illustrate the philosophical points Gurdjieff makes regarding the human propensity to forget the inevitability of one's death, and the hypnotic sleep that has been ingrained in the human organism to make possible such amnesia and obstacle to spiritual awakening.

Meanwhile, these experiences exposed him to the seemingly irreconcilable worlds of science and religion. As Gurdjieff grew up and made travels to nearby regions to make a living for himself (and partly for his family), this sense of wonder and search for "truth" did not diminish; instead, it grew deeper and more obsessive in time.

2. *The Search Period (1888–1912)*

The *search* period in Gurdjieff's life begins in 1888 around the age of 16 with his move to Tiflis when transitioning from preparatory to responsible life, and ends in 1912, at the age of 40, when he enters Moscow to establish his Institute. Although the exact nature of events during this "missing" period in Gurdjieff's life has been a subject of controversy among Gurdjieff scholars, Gurdjieff's own texts provide ample evidence about the basic contours of his searches during the period. The difficulty in reconstructing the chronology of Gurdjieff's life during this period emanates from the fragmented style of Gurdjieff's autobiography, that, as we noted above, seems to have been intentionally adopted by him for teaching purposes.

The search period of Gurdjieff's life can be divided into three main phases: 1888–1892, 1892–1902, and 1902–1912.

For the first time living apart from and independent of his family as a young adult, Gurdjieff is preoccupied during the first phase (1888–1892) with making a living while searching for answers to his spiritual questions in the wider Caucasus region. He reports having learned a wide variety of professional and craft skills during this period which allowed him not only to support himself for the first time, but also to provide material means and resources for his spiritual investigations (H:17). Witnessing new "miracles" in the wider region, and having become disillusioned about the possibility

of finding any explanations for those “miracles” in the books or people of science, Gurdjieff turned to religion. He traveled to all the religious centers of the Caucasus region, visited Constantinople (Istanbul), and as a result of an early archeological discovery in the Armenian ruins traveled to Egypt, Jerusalem, and Iraq (Babylon), soon finding his way to Mecca and Medina which are forbidden to people of other faiths. During this period, Gurdjieff made many friends (Ekim Bey, Pogossian, Yelov, Skridlov, Lubovedsky), among whom the nucleus of the “Seekers of Truth” group would be formed in 1895. In the course of these travels, however, Gurdjieff became again disappointed at finding no answers in established religions.

The year 1892 was crucial for Gurdjieff for three reasons. First, it was during the 1888–1892 period, while being absorbed in his initial searches, that the “cardinal question” of Gurdjieff’s quest was finally formulated and ingrained in the fabric of his being: “to understand clearly the precise significance, in general, of the life process on Earth of all the outward forms of breathing creatures and, in particular, of the aim of human life in the light of this interpretation” (H:13). Second, he explicitly acknowledged that “Until that year, ... I did not succeed in discovering anything, anywhere or from anybody, that could logically-and-harmoniously throw light upon even one aspect of this question” (H:16). And third, it was during this year that Gurdjieff, having become disillusioned about ever finding any answers among his contemporaries, discovered during a self-imposed meditation retreat in an Islamic monastery the significance of the “subconscious” mind and especially of “hypnotism,” as providing the key to finding the ultimate answers to his spiritual quests. In this regard, Gurdjieff writes:

As a result of pursuing this method [meditation, guided by what Gurdjieff calls “the-laws-of-contemplation”] for three days, while I did not arrive at any definite conclusions, I still became clearly and absolutely convinced that the answers for which I was looking, and which in their totality might throw light on this cardinal question of mine, can only be found, if they are at all accessible to man, in the sphere of “man’s-subconsciousness-mentation.”

Then I became firmly convinced also that, for this purpose, it was indispensable for me to perfect my knowledge of all the details of the formation as well as of the mechanism of the manifestation of man’s general psyche.

Arriving at this categorical conclusion, I began again, for several days and in my habitual manner, to think and think almost uninterruptedly about what should be done in order to create requisite and satisfactory worldly conditions making possible the study of such an unexpected problem. (H:18–19)

The second phase of Gurdjieff’s search period (1892–1902) was spent in numerous “wanderings and “peregrinations” (H:19) during which he

collected all the written and oral material necessary for his project of understanding the nature of the human psyche and especially "hypnotism." About this task of the second phase Gurdjieff writes:

I began to collect all kinds of written literature and oral information, still surviving among certain Asiatic peoples, about that branch of science, which was highly developed in ancient times and called "Mehkeness", a name signifying the "taking-away-of-responsibility", and of which contemporary civilisation knows but an insignificant portion under the name of "hypnotism", while all the literature extant upon the subject was already as familiar to me as my own five fingers. (H:19)

During this second phase, Gurdjieff widely traveled to various regions in Asia, Europe, Africa, Siberia, remote regions of Caucasus, Iran (Persia), Iraq, Kafirstan, Bukhara, Crete, Rome, Gobi Desert, Amu Darya, Pamir region, and India. During these trips he made new friends (Vitvitskaya, Soloviev, and Dr. Sari-Ogli). It is in the year 1895 that Gurdjieff claimed to have succeeded in entering the secret school, Sarmoung. Also it is during this period that he met the three elders that provided him with the key to understanding the physical, astral, and divine bodies of man—the Persian dervish in 1894, the mountain "*ez-ezounavouran*" (in Turkish, "he who beats himself") in 1900, and Father Giovanni in 1895. These three figures may be the prototypes based on which he later identified the traditional three ways (associated with the fakir, the monk, and the yogi, representing the three physical, emotional, and intellectual one-sided paths of mysticism⁹), and synthesized his "fourth" way in distinction from the traditional three.

But the apex of the second phase was reached in 1900 when, collecting all the oral and written information he had found, Gurdjieff retreated for two years completely devoted to study. In this regard, G. writes:

Collecting all I could, I went to a certain Dervish monastery, situated likewise in Central Asia and where I had already stayed before, and, settling down there, I devoted myself wholly to the study of the material in my possession. (H:10–20)

Gurdjieff suggests explicitly that this intensive "theoretical" study took two years. Whether the monastery Gurdjieff mentions is the same as the Sarmoung (in which he also had stayed before in 1895) is not, of course, clear from his account. Although what he found and developed theoretically during the two-year period required further practical verification and

9. The formal labels Gurdjieff gives the three elders is somewhat misleading and should not be confused with the spiritual ways they represent. The Persian dervish actually represents the fakir's way, the "fakir" mountain elder actually represents the monk's way, and the monk Father Giovanni actually represents the yogi's way here in terms of the ideal-types Gurdjieff constructs for the three traditional mystical ways.

elaboration in the following phase, it is clear that by the end of 1901, Gurdjieff had achieved a synthesis of the “fragments” of information he had collected until then and had developed the basic structure of the “system” of ideas for which he became known in the following decades.

The third phase (1902–1912) was the period during which Gurdjieff sought not only to practically verify his theoretical knowledge about human psyche and hypnotism, but also to further develop it experimentally. He breaks down this phase into three intervals. First he spent, almost exclusively for four to five years, giving himself out as a “healer.” This is the least known period of Gurdjieff’s life. All he reveals is that it was at the beginning (1902) and midpoint (1904) of this period that he was struck twice by stray bullets. These events happened separately in Tibet and in the Chitral tunnel in the Caucasus, from which he recuperated in the same location at the outskirts of the Gobi Desert. In both cases, he was in the accompaniment of several physicians, a fact that is perhaps related to his “healer” occupation at the time.

During the “healer” period, Gurdjieff not only verified and further developed his theoretical knowledge about human psyche and hypnotism, he also came across new material that he had not even suspected to exist:

After two years of thorough theoretical study of this branch of science, when it became necessary to verify practically certain indispensable details, not as yet sufficiently elucidated by me in theory, of the mechanism of the functioning of man’s subconscious sphere, I began to give myself out to be a “healer” of all kinds of vices and to apply the results of my theoretical studies to them, affording them at the same time, of course, real relief.

This continued to be my exclusive preoccupation and manifestation for four or five years in accordance with the essential oath imposed by my task, which consisted in rendering conscientious aid to sufferers, in never using my knowledge and practical power in that domain of science except for the sake of my investigations, and never for personal or egotistical ends, I not only arrived at unprecedented practical results without equal in our day, but also elucidated almost everything necessary for me.

In a short time, I discovered many details which might contribute to the solution of the same cardinal question, as well as many secondary facts, the existence of which I had scarcely suspected. (H, 20)

In order to better understand Gurdjieff’s activities during his later teaching period, it is crucial here to note Gurdjieff’s thoughts at the end of his “healer” experimentation phase when he concluded that in order to complete his understanding of the human psyche he had to study not only the human subconscious mind, but also the human behavior during the waking state. In this regard, Gurdjieff writes:

At the same time, I also became convinced that the greater number of minor details necessary for the final elucidation of this question must be sought not only in the sphere of man's subconscious mentation, but in various aspects of the manifestations in his state of waking consciousness. (H:20)

It took two years of further wanderings and travels (1906–1907) following the clandestine "healer" period for Gurdjieff to adjust himself to the "conditions of ordinary life." But also it is during this transition period that Gurdjieff sought ways to provide conditions where his researches on the "waking" human behavior could be carried out. It is important to note that Gurdjieff still considered this knowledge indispensable for his arriving "finally and infallibly" (H:21) at the answers to the "cardinal question" he had formulated previously during the pre-1892 phase.

Finally, Gurdjieff decided to pursue this new research agenda by giving himself out as a "professor-instructor" among the new "theosophical" circles that at the time were emerging all over Russia and Europe (H:21). He initially allocated three years for this project, and despite the fact that he had already established his reputation among these circles six months into the project, at the beginning of the third year of this activity (H:22), that is in 1910, he realized that the particular composition of individual human "types" represented in these circles were insufficient for his project at hand. As soon as he realized this, Gurdjieff gave up the three "workshops" he had joined among the theosophist circles and sought to form his own "circle" that would be more representative of the whole "28 'categories-of-types' existing on Earth" that he was seeking to study.

He spent three years (1910–12) to organize and form these independent circles for his research. However, at the second year of this period, Gurdjieff began to question whether the short-lived contacts established for the purpose would be sufficient for his purpose. It was during these pondering in 1911 that he came up with the idea of his lifetime's project, that is of establishing what he called then "Institute-For-Man's-Harmonious-Development-according-to-the-system-of-G. Gurdjieff" (H:23)—later modified to the "Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man."

Taking an oath in 1911 to conduct an "artificial life" for the next twenty one years, Gurdjieff entered Moscow in 1912 with a practical plan for establishing his Institute, having in mind the following thought:

The 'canvas', so to say, which served as a background for this decision was the consideration that, with such a broadly planned public organization, embracing as it did almost all the interests of contemporary life, I would be sure to bring together—apart from the types I had mainly met before—all the other types of people previously lacking for my observations. (H:23)

In pursuing this aim to form the Institute, however, Gurdjieff was concerned with observing "objective justice" toward those he planned to

recruit and study. In what way, he thought, could his need to study various “types” of human beings be reconciled with the very purpose of the Institute to help men and women develop themselves harmoniously?

The epigraph opening this chapter clearly illustrates the kind of reasoning that went on in Gurdjieff’s mind in regard to the practical need for and purpose of his Institute.

3. The Teaching Period (1912–1949)

The teaching period of Gurdjieff’s life can be divided into three major phases: 1-Organizing (1912–1925); 2-Writing (1925–1935); and 3-Reorganizing (1935–1949).

Gurdjieff’s twenty one year plan of organizing his Institute that took off in 1912 met with considerable historical and personal obstacles. Two years into his efforts, WWI erupted in Europe and soon the revolutionary situation in Russia reached its boiling point when the Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace in 1917. Having already gathered many new pupils, among them the noted Russian mathematician and journalist P. D. Ouspensky, around himself, Gurdjieff suddenly found not only his plans for setting up the Institute in Moscow, but also all the vast amount of financial and other resources prepared in the preceding years for the purpose, at serious risk. In fact, he later reported to have lost most of his resources by the time he decided to leave Russia through the Caucasus in the accompaniment of almost two hundred of his pupils and relatives. In the course of his travels out of Russia, however, Gurdjieff did not give up the efforts to organize the Institute. He made considerable efforts to actually conduct his school teachings and exercises in Essentuki and Tiflis, while he also considered establishing the Institute in Constantinople, Germany, or Britain, before finally deciding on France, in Chateau du Prieuré in Fontainebleau, located in the outskirts of Paris, as the final headquarters of his long-sought Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man. Gurdjieff’s dream thus began to take shape in the summer of 1922.

In his efforts to establish the Institute, Gurdjieff presented himself as a representative of a “fourth way” school, distinguished from the ways of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi in a twofold sense: first, in contrast to these earlier three ways, Gurdjieff’s “fourth way” sought liberation amid life, not in retreat from it, and second, it sought parallel and simultaneous work on one’s physical, emotional, and intellectual centers as aspects of a singular process of work on oneself for self-perfection. Pupils, who were encouraged to treat the school simply as a temporary place that provides preparatory conditions for eventual detachment from the master and for return to life, participated in question and answer sessions directed by Gurdjieff or his senior pupils, and engaged in various purposely designed projects, exercises, dances, and movements that aided their “work” on themselves.

Not long after the "maddest period" of his life began in 1922, however, under enormous physical and financial pressures, Gurdjieff had a near-fatal auto accident in 1924 on his way to Chateau du Prieuré not long after returning from his first trip to the United States where he directed his pupil's demonstrations of dances and movements. This personal accident completely changed Gurdjieff's plans for his Institute as he had envisioned before. With most of his physical and mental energy in jeopardy, and having lost hope of ever seeing his ideas printed and published by Ouspensky, who by this time had distanced himself from his teacher citing a divergence between Gurdjieff's personality and teaching, Gurdjieff decided to transmit his teaching to his contemporaries and posterity through writing.

The ten year 1925–1935 period of Gurdjieff's life was almost completely absorbed in writing his three series commonly titled *All and Everything*. His efforts in this direction was pushed forward despite hardships such as health problems, deaths of his mother and wife, and financial difficulties. He wrote his texts in a combination of Russian and Armenian, and then simultaneously had them translated by various pupils into other languages. Orage, the noted editor of the *New Age*, who soon became, through the introduction of Ouspensky, one of Gurdjieff's close pupils, played a major role in editing both the First and the Second Series into English. Although the first draft of the First Series was already completed by 1928, Gurdjieff soon discovered, during sessions devoted to reading of his text to his pupils, that most of what he had written was almost completely incomprehensible to those especially not already acquainted with his ideas. Despite much despair, and fearing not to live long enough to finish his writings, let alone to realize his twenty-one year plan of actively establishing his Institute, Gurdjieff decided to renew his efforts at rewriting the complete text of the First Series. At the same time he also simultaneously began writing his Second and Third Series while making a wager with himself during this effort to gain his full health and to understand fully all that he had not yet clarified for himself about the human psyche.

By 1932, Gurdjieff reported that he had written in more or less finished draft form almost all the material he had intended to write. However, in regard to the Third Series, he decided to destroy all that he had written until then, having found them to be inappropriate for his purpose. His renewed efforts to rewrite the final draft of the Third Series seems to have stopped suddenly on April 14, 1935, despite the fact that Gurdjieff continued to live in relatively good and revitalized health in the following years. During this period, most of Gurdjieff's writings remained unpublished and were accessible only to his close or interested pupils through reading sessions. An exception, though, was the booklet *Herald* that Gurdjieff personally published in 1933, allegedly in nine languages of 1,000 volumes each, but soon decided to withdraw from circulation, advising his students not to

read it for the sake of his health. The rest of Gurdjieff's writings, meanwhile, remained unpublished until his death in 1949, to be later gradually published by his pupils.

Paradoxically, Gurdjieff's renewed efforts to reorganize his Institute during the final (1935–1949) period of his life was met with yet another major obstacle: World War II. Having decided to remain in France, which was occupied during the war, Gurdjieff still pursued his style of teaching amid suffering brought on by war and social crises. The difference now, compared to the first period of efforts made toward establishment of the Institute, was that his teaching was closely accompanied by frequent oral readings of selected chapters of his writings. Gurdjieff was often present during these sessions, and closely observed the reaction of the audience to his ideas and when necessary modified the text to more effectively achieve his purpose. In this way, the third phase of Gurdjieff's teaching involved a reconciliation of his initial organizing efforts and labors at writing.

Having already suffered more financial setbacks during his writing period as a result of the 1930s Depression, Gurdjieff managed to borrow enough money to survive during the war while promising his creditors to repay them after the war upon recovering his riches in American "oil fields." Pupils continued to gather around him and this trend gained momentum toward the end of his life as a result of Gurdjieff's efforts to reunite his scattered pupils before the end of his days. The death on October 2, 1947, of Ouspensky (Moore 1991:335), who had gathered the most number of pupils around the teaching he had learned from Gurdjieff, gave an additional boost to the size of Gurdjieff's following. While the Chateau du Prieuré in Fontainebleau had already been permanently lost in 1933 (Moore 1991:332) due to a lack of financial resources, Gurdjieff managed during the final period of his life to establish networks of his pupils across major European cities and the United States. Having given directions on his death bed to his senior pupil and successor, Jeanne de Salzmann, regarding the posthumous publication of his writings, Gurdjieff died in 1949 in France.

The First Series of Gurdjieff's writings was published in 1950, and reprinted several times, with an adaptation ("new translation") appearing in 1992 and 2006. Due to protests by some of Gurdjieff's followers about unaccountable changes made in the revision to the original English translation (see Prologue, footnote 2), a facsimile of the original 1950 version was published in 1993. The Second Series was published first in French in 1960 and in English in 1963. The "incomplete" Third Series was published, privately, in 1975 and publicly in 1978. As part of his teaching, many sacred dances and musical pieces were recorded and have been diligently preserved by his pupils.

Chapter Six **LIFE IS REAL ONLY THEN, WHEN “I AM” NOT
HYPNOTIZED**

THIRD SERIES: To assist the arising, in the mentation and in the feelings of the reader, of a veritable, nonfantastic representation not of that illusory world which he now perceives, but of the world existing in reality.

—B:v

It all ended thus, that I decided to take an oath before my own essence, in a state of mind known to me, never again to make use of this property of mine.

I must also mention that, when I took the oath not to apply in life this inherency of mine, I made a reservation that my oath should not concern the application of it for scientific purposes.

For instance, I was very much interested then, and even now my interest has not entirely vanished, in increasing the visibility of distant cosmic centers many thousand times through the use of a medium, and in the cure of cancer by the power of suggestion.

—L:26

The detailed survey, in previous chapters, of Gurdjieff's teaching highlighted the reasons why in his lifelong search for the sense and meaning of organic and human life and death on Earth, he became particularly drawn to the problem of human subconsciousness and especially the (“ancient”) science of

hypnotism. It is the splitting of human consciousness into three independently functioning instinctive, waking conscious, and subconscious realms (corresponding to the separately functioning physical, mental, and emotional centers in the organism) that explained to Gurdjieff not only how an apparently intelligent human organism can perform a purely mechanical and automatic function in the cosmic order, but also why, given its vulnerability to hypnosis, it has hitherto been unable to awaken at a species level to seek its proper evolutionary path back to God.

Therefore, given Gurdjieff's emphasis on the propensity to hypnosis as a basic explanatory factor for human disharmonization, and the paradigmatic call in his teaching for the awakening of humanity from a mechanical life imprisoned in the hypnotic trance of everyday life, any critical evaluation of Gurdjieff's own teaching has to necessarily concern itself with the question of whether (and if so, how) Gurdjieff used hypnotism in his own teaching. In this and following chapters, I will explore Gurdjieff's writings in an effort to find an answer to this central question.

Having *deductively* elaborated in the preceding chapters on the outlines of Gurdjieff's teaching and life, in this and the following two chapters I will adopt a reverse, *inductive* and phenomenological approach.¹ Beginning from a careful analysis of the *practical* manifestations of Gurdjieff's teaching also allows one to explore their underlying theoretical and philosophical foundations in a more concrete and tangible way. Before embarking on this reverse journey, however, several preliminary questions need to be addressed regarding the form and sequence of Gurdjieff's writings.

Preliminary Questions

... no one interested in my writings should ever attempt to read them in any other than the indicated order; in other words, he should never read anything written by me before he is already well acquainted with the earlier works, even if someone, with a particular motive, should attempt to persuade him to commence the reading other than from the beginning.

Believe me, you must take my word for it, that the exact carrying out of this wish of mine can be of great importance to you and your interests, and I, therefore, particularly stress and insist on it.

I shall not now write in detail of the consequences which will result if my request is not carried out; these I have elucidated and verified by my own long observation and statistical calculations. I shall only say here that, for certain people, a reading of my writings in any other than the indicated

1. For further elaborations on the difference between the dialectics of abstraction and concretion when applying the dialectical method, please see the methodological appendix (titled, "The Creative Dialectical Method") in my previous study, *Advancing Utopistics: The Three Component Parts and Errors of Marxism* (2007a: 226–296).

order (**no matter if the reader has long been a follower of my ideas or has become one recently**), can provoke undesirable phenomena in their general psyche, one of which in particular might paralyse forever the possibility of normal self-perfection. (H:57–58; emphasis in bold/italics added)

As soon as we begin our inductive reexamination of Gurdjieff's teaching by exploring his writings in reverse order, that is, by starting from the Third Series first, we are confronted with a quotation from Gurdjieff, inserted as an epigraph by the editors at the outset of his Third Series (L:vi), a fuller version of which is reproduced above (the portion quoted by the editors in the epigraph to the Third Series is in bolditalics). This seems to be quite a strong warning by Gurdjieff, one that for a hermeneutic study of his writings cannot be readily dismissed. So, I am obliged to dwell on this matter before proceeding with a textual analysis of the Third Series.

What immediately surprises a careful reader, as far as the epigraphs inserted by the editors in the Third Series are concerned, is that while a second passage from Gurdjieff on the very same epigraph page in which the first quotation appears in the 1991 [1978] edition of the Third Series (L:vi) is fully referenced to its source, including the page number, the first quotation containing the above particular warning (in bolditalics) is only identified to be from Gurdjieff with no reference to its source given. Why?

One reason for the absence of citation may be that the source of the said passage—i.e., the only book published and soon withdrawn by Gurdjieff during his lifetime, that is, *Herald*—was a book which he warned his readers in the Third Series *not* to read, if they had not done so previously. It is in fact in the prologue to the Third Series that Gurdjieff gives this advice:

And so, having this in mind, I consider it my duty, for the possibility of attaining my third fundamental aim also to entire satisfaction, to give here the following advice:

If you as yet have not read this book entitled *The Herald of Coming Good*, then thank the circumstances and do not read it. (L:50)

The "third fundamental aim" to which Gurdjieff makes a reference in the above passage was his aim to regain his full physical health upon completion of all his writings (L:35, 46, 50).

In choosing the unsourced passage from *Herald* for their epigraph to the Third Series, the editors in effect follow one Gurdjieff advice (warning about the order of readings), while disregarding another (quoting from a book disclaimed by him). The lack of proper citation perhaps indicates both respect and ambivalence on their part about the second warning.

However, if we consider the two warnings by Gurdjieff more closely, we realize that in fact they nullify one another. If Gurdjieff in the Third Series tells us not to read *Herald*, this means that the other warning about the order of readings no longer stands. Of course this perhaps was not what

Gurdjieff intended to do but, logically speaking, the nullification stands. Those who have never read *Herald* would not confront any warnings in the series themselves that they should be read in any particular order.

Despite these warnings by Gurdjieff, I maintain that the reverse exploration of his writings is justified for the following reasons, all commensurate with his teaching guidelines:

1) *Herald* was *the* first (and only) book Gurdjieff formally published in his lifetime. (The galley proofs of the First Series had been approved by Gurdjieff immediately before his death, but the fact remains that its formal publication took place posthumously.) In *Herald* Gurdjieff warns his readers to read his writings in the order in which they were intended. He especially directs us to read his earlier writings before reading the later ones. *Herald* was intended to be read *before* all his series. So it must come first in the proper order of reading, if *Herald* is to be read and followed. But since Gurdjieff later disclaims and withdraws *Herald*, the warning about the order of readings as a whole no longer needs to be observed and followed.

2) Gurdjieff's advice about not reading *Herald* was meant by him for the purpose of achieving his third aim of regaining his physical health. Given the fact that he has already passed away (physically, at least—to be fair to his cosmology), there is no reason why *Herald* could not be consulted posthumously as a primary source on Gurdjieff's teaching and life.

3) Reading Gurdjieff's writings in other than his prescribed order does not necessarily mean that we may not have read them in his preferred order the first time. Gurdjieff does not suggest in his directive that his prescribed order should be followed in later readings as well. After all, how can this be possible, for in any repeat reading of his texts after the first "thrice" reading of each series (which he encourages his readers to do), the later series have already been read before rereading the earlier series. Therefore, our reverse exploration of his writings should not prevent those who have already read Gurdjieff's writings in the proper order from continuing to read this book.

As trivial as the above preliminary comments may seem in regard to laying to rest any concerns about the proper or reverse order of reading Gurdjieff's writings, several key questions still remain that I think are of significance for a hermeneutic understanding of Gurdjieff's writings.

Why did in fact Gurdjieff warn his readers/pupils in *Herald* so emphatically to read his writings in a prescribed order? And why did he withdraw *Herald* from circulation soon after its publication in 1933, discouraging his students to read it—to the point where the editors of the Third Series have refrained from acknowledging their epigraph source?

This warning, of course, was not the only advice given by Gurdjieff to his readers regarding the manner of reading his texts. The First Series of his writings, in fact, begins with a another "Friendly Advice" to his readers (not about the order, but about the number of times each text must be read):

I find it necessary on the first page of this book, quite ready for publication, to give the following advice:

“Read each of my written expositions thrice:

Firstly—at least as you have already become mechanized to read all your contemporary books and newspapers.

Secondly—as if you were reading aloud to another person.

And only thirdly—try and fathom the gist of my writings.”

Only then will you be able to count upon forming your own impartial judgment, proper to yourself alone, on my writings. And only then can my hope be actualized that according to your understanding you will obtain the specific benefit for yourself which I anticipate, and which I wish for you with all my being. (B:vi)

Gurdjieff again comes back to the subject (“Beelzebub Explains to His Grandson the Significance of Form and Sequence Which He Chose for Expounding the Information Concerning Man”) toward the end of his First Series (B:1161–72), providing yet further evidence that he attached great significance to the proper manner of reading his writings.

Why was Gurdjieff so concerned about the order (sequence), form, and repetition in the procedure of reading his writings?

Other questions about Gurdjieff’s writings present themselves from the outset. Why did Gurdjieff not publish his writings during his lifetime? According to his own records, the First Series had already been completed by 1931 (at least) and the Second Series (in its early version) had already been completed by 1933 (see the Appendix). Even if we do not consider the allegedly “incomplete and unfinished” (de Salzmänn, L:xi) Third Series which had been already completed in its original version by 1930, given Gurdjieff’s numerous announcements regarding the imminent publication of his First Series (at least) it is noteworthy that none of his writings, except for the disclaimed *Herald*, were published during his lifetime. Why?

The recollections of one of his senior pupils, Jeanne de Salzmänn, about the final directives of Gurdjieff on his deathbed regarding the posthumous publication of his series was as follows:

“Publish as and when you are sure that the time has come. Publish the First and Second series. But the essential thing, the first thing, is to prepare a nucleus of people capable of responding to the demand which will arise.

“So long as there is no responsible nucleus, the action of the ideas will not go beyond a certain threshold. That will take time ... a lot of time, even.

“To publish the Third Series is not necessary.

“It was written for another purpose.

“Nevertheless, if you believe you ought to do so one day, publish it.” (L:xi–xii)

Does the quotation above explain, at least partly, why Gurdjieff did not himself publish his series earlier, that is, during his own lifetime? In other words, is it apparent, deducible from the reasoning in the description of his final directive, that he felt he had not yet established by the time of his death, the necessary “responsible nucleus” of pupils capable of responding to the demand that may arise as a result of the publication of his writings—hence, his reluctance to publish his writings during his lifetime?

But this raises another important question: Why did Gurdjieff feel that he had not succeeded during his lifetime to establish a “responsible” nucleus of people capable of continuing his legacy?² Another related observation is that Gurdjieff’s final directive indicates he expected that the formation of such a “responsible” nucleus would take time, and he emphasized, “a lot of time.” The First Series was published, however, in 1950, shortly after Gurdjieff’s death. Does this mean that in his students’ judgment, they had already achieved the minimal conditions expected by Gurdjieff?

Another question still remains in regard to Gurdjieff’s writing career. Why did he not “finish” his Third Series? Or, did he? As we shall see, Gurdjieff’s ten-year deadline for completing all of his writing projects ended in 1935. He passed away in 1949. Gurdjieff had almost fifteen additional years to put the final touches to his Third Series (of course this is in hindsight regarding how much time he had left, but still, there was plenty of time). However, apparently, he did not finish it. Besides, particularly interesting is that there is no mention in his deathbed utterance, as described above by Jeanne de Salzmann, about the “incomplete” nature of the Third Series. Rather, he mentions that it “was written” for another purpose. What was that “another purpose”?

The “Unfinished” Third Series: An Artful Inexactitude?

In his characterizations of “objective art” inherited from the “ancient” past, Gurdjieff sets forth the idea in his First Series that in order to pass on important truths to their posterity, the ancients purposely constructed “lawful inexactitudes” in their works of art so that through conscious labor their descendants could rediscover those important truths (B:461–65). With a proper understanding of the Laws of Three and Seven and how they ought to be manifested and represented in their works of art, for instance, the ancients made such obvious alterations in their artwork that through closer study they revealed significant truths.”

“In all the productions which we shall intentionally create on the basis of this Law [of Sevenfoldness] for the purpose of transmitting to remote

2. According to another account of Gurdjieff’s deathbed remarks, disputed by other pupils in its expression though not its substance, he had also said “I have left you all in a fine mess!” (Speeth 1989:xi).

generations, we shall intentionally introduce certain also lawful inexactitudes, and in these lawful inexactitudes we shall place, by means available to us, the contents of some true knowledge or other which is already in the possession of men of the present time.

“In any case, for the interpretation itself, or, as may be said, for the “key” to those inexactitudes in that great Law, we shall further make in our productions something like a Legominism, and we shall secure its transmission from generation to generation through initiates of a special kind, whom we shall call initiates of art.

“And we shall call them so because the whole process of such a transmission of knowledge to remote generations through the Law of Sevenfoldness will not be natural but artificial.” (B:461–62)

A visible, and puzzling, “inexactitude” in Gurdjieff’s “ten books in three series”—if we consider them as his “objective art” work—was that he allegedly left the third of his intended series “unfinished.” The First and Second Series were comprised of three books each. The Third Series was to begin with the seventh book. As soon as it was time to begin the Third Series with the “seventh” book of his writings, however, something went wrong. According to Gurdjieff, the “ancients” gave clues about their intended inexactitudes by invoking the numbers of seven or three, for these numbers would always be remembered as they represent universal laws.

Let us then examine the intended purpose of Gurdjieff’s “Third” Series.

The Third Series, which was from the beginning titled, and remained as such, *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am,"* was aimed “towards the solution” of the following third cardinal problem of his writings as a whole:

THIRD SERIES: To assist the arising, in the mentation and in the feelings of the reader, of a veritable, nonfantastic representation not of that illusory world which he now perceives, but of the world existing in reality. (B:v)

In other words, the intended aim of the Third Series was to help the reader awaken from the hypnotic sleep of her or his fantastic and illusory life and acquire in her or his mentation and feelings a sense of the *real* world.

Gurdjieff had intended to write four books³ under the common title of the Third Series, in contrast to the three books intended for the First Series,

3. In the “revised” edition or translation/adaptation of the First Series (1992), in the opening pages of which Gurdjieff’s conception of the division of his series and books is presented, the numbers of books in each series were revised by the editors (without any explanation) in terms of 3, 2, and 5 books for the three series respectively. For our purpose of exploring Gurdjieff’s original writings, the revised version is ignored, for Gurdjieff was consistent throughout all his writings about the numeric (3, 3, 4) distribution of his books into three series (H:48; B:v). Regarding the 1992/2006 “new translations” of the First Series, see the communication by J. Walter Driscoll reproduced in footnote 2 of the Prologue to the present book (see p. xvii).

and the three books for the Second Series (B:v). However, what we have in the published form of the Third Series (1991) *seems* to be indeed “incomplete and unfinished” (de Salzmänn, L:xi). Other than the editors’ comments at the beginning, the book has a long prologue, an introduction to the first book, a series of five talks given by Gurdjieff during the period November–December 1930 in New York City (intended to be the first book of the Third Series), and a last “chapter” whose text is suddenly cut off. In fact the fourth talk in the series is abruptly cut off (L:130). Gurdjieff himself, in his prologue and introduction, refers to the totality of the five talks as the first “introductory book of the Third Series” (L:58) and the last incomplete section under the title “The Outer and Inner World of Man” is identified by him as the “concluding chapter of my final book” (L:54). Gurdjieff seems, more or less consistently, to use in his Third Series the distinction chapter/book and book/series interchangeably, i.e., instead of saying four books of the last Third Series, he may say four chapters of the last book of his writings. He even once refers to his prologue as the opening “chapter” of his Third Series (L:53). Or, he encourages his readers to study “this, my last book, especially the essence of the concluding chapter” (L:54).

In light of the original “four books” intended for the Third Series, therefore, the first book/chapter is present (noting that the fourth talk in the first book/chapter is cut off), the second and third books/chapters are missing, and the last one titled “The Outer and Inner World of Man” is present but incomplete. *It should not escape our attention, however, that Gurdjieff does also once refer to this “last” chapter as his “second chapter”* (L:161).

In any case, the apparently “incomplete” nature of the *published* Third Series is, of course, undeniable. There is a prologue. There is a more or less complete first chapter/book. There is another (last, or second?) chapter/book present but is incomplete. And two chapters/books are missing.

Based on the textual chronology of biographical information about Gurdjieff presented in the Appendix, let us reconstruct the chronology of Gurdjieff’s writing “career.” This is presented in Figure 6.1.

The *first and indeed most interesting* revelation (or shock?) emerging from the publication of the “incomplete and unfinished” Third Series is the fact that according to Gurdjieff himself, he had already completed a full first draft of the “last book” of the three series by as early as 1930. On April 2nd, 1935, when Gurdjieff is writing his prologue to the Third Series, he states:

All three of the aims, self-imposed seven years ago, I dare say I had already achieved last year, but I decided to continue the fulfillment of different “will-tasks” until the expiration of the seven-year period ... (L:47)

The first of those three aims, Gurdjieff tells us just before the above passage, was having “puffed” three small booklets into ten substantial volumes” (L:46). The other two aims, having to do with his physical health and final

understanding of the nature of human psyche, Gurdjieff had also more or less achieved by then. However, he then suggests that as soon as he finished the last "summarizing-concluding" book of all his writings, he destroyed it:

On this book, I set to work at the end of the third year of my literary activity and, working at it only at intervals, completed it in three years.

Notwithstanding the fact that for the writing of such a, as it might be called, "summarizing-concluding" book I had to put in a great deal of labor, unpleasant experiences, and money, etc., I was nevertheless compelled, almost on the very day when I finally completed it, to destroy in its entirety all this, my tedious work of many years.

I was compelled to destroy not only this book itself but also everything prepared for the affirmation of the spirit of its essence.

During just that period, when I was finishing the writing of this "concluding" book, the functioning of both my usual mentations, that is, active and passive, proceeded tensely with unusual intensity.

With my active mentation, I was putting the so to say "last polish" on the contents of this book so important for the whole totality of my writings, and the passive was occupied with the transformation of that same material which more than anything else has assisted me in having, at the present time, ideal health.

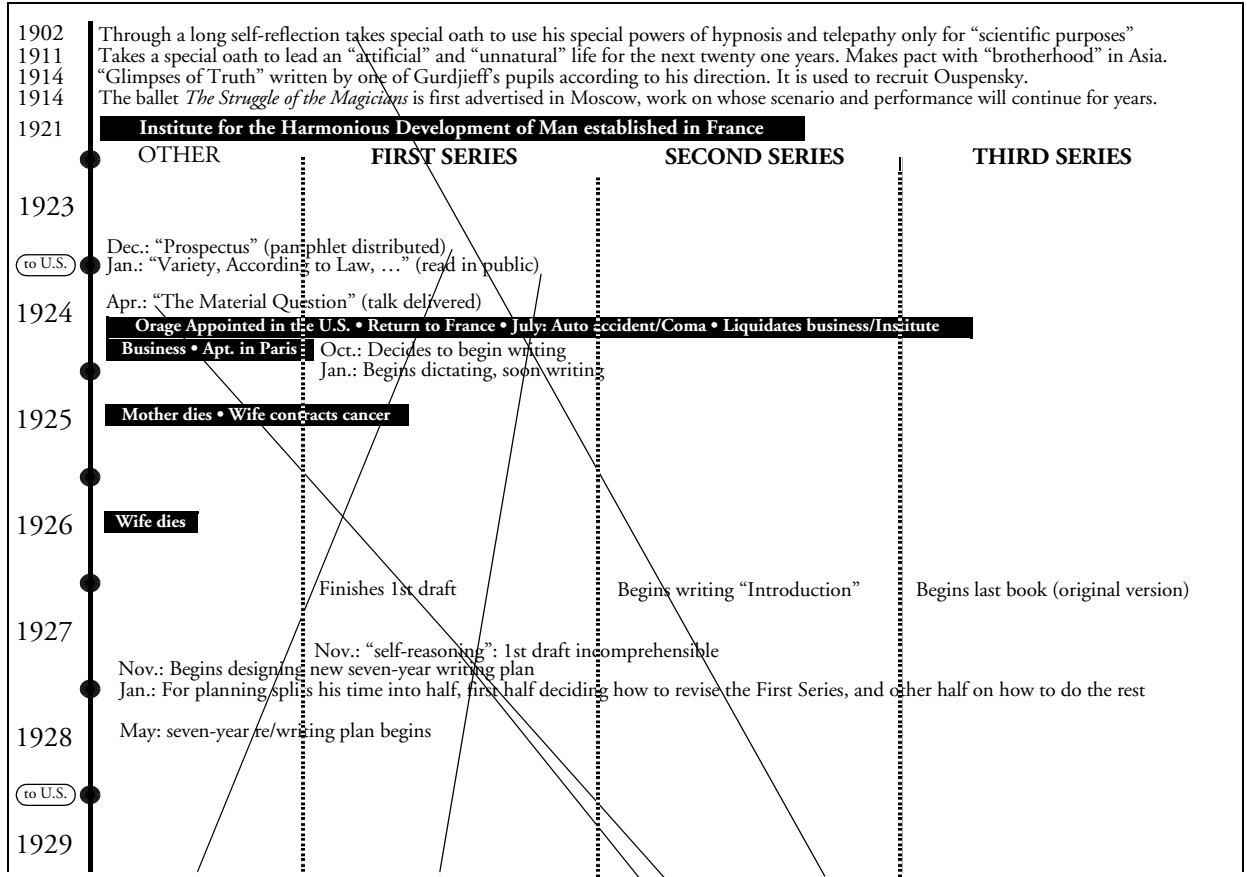
So just then, while fulfilling in constant intensity of mentation my various will-tasks, I began to notice in my own inner world as well as in others many particularities previously unknown to me.

And when I began for my own conviction to check statistically these unexpectedly noticed particularities and to establish the fact of their actuality, then I found all that I had written in this last book entirely worthless for my premeditated aim.

So, thanks to this, the third reason thus consisted in this, that it was necessary for this predetermined aim to write a new book with an entirely new content. (L:48-49)

The "third year of my literary activity" to which Gurdjieff refers as the beginning of work on the last book would be 1927, and in three years, its completion would be achieved in 1930. The alleged "destruction" of this original version of the last book took place as a result of his observation of "many peculiarities previously unknown" to him not only in himself, but also among some of his followers in 1930. This is around the same time he decided to give the five talks in New York City, which then comprised the new first book of the Third Series.

This brings us to the *second* most interesting aspect of the information contained in the Third Series. It is of course in the first book of the Third Series, in the course of the five talks delivered during the November-



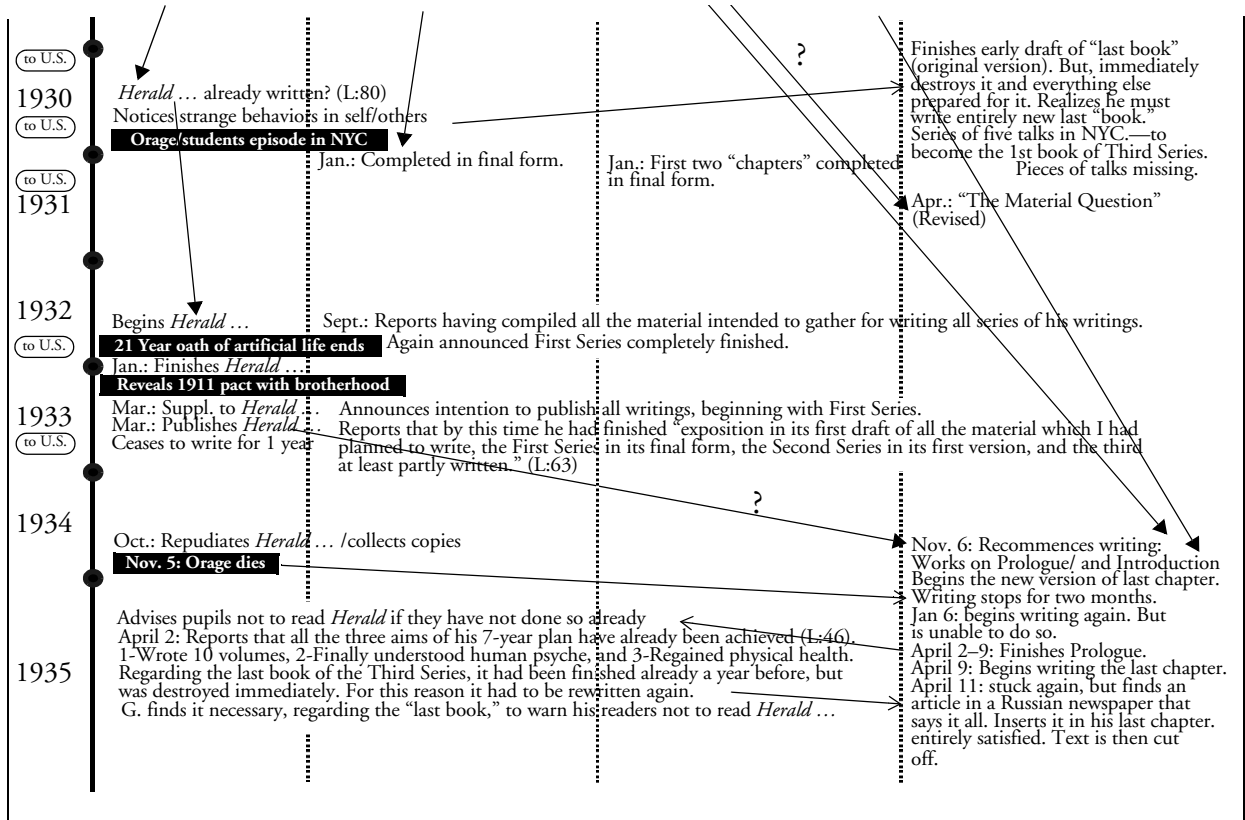


Figure 6.1 Chronology of Gurdjieff's Writing Period

December 1930 period, that Gurdjieff reveals his observation of the peculiar behavior in his pupils. The first talk is especially devoted to the explanation of how one or another aspect of his teaching became fixated in different groups of his followers across different countries depending on the cultural geography of their background. Delivering the talks to the American audience of his followers, he especially directed his attention to the effects of misinstructions of his teaching by A. R. Orage during Gurdjieff's absence from America during the preceding seven years.

The point here is not yet to enter into the substance of the talks. Interesting to note, rather, is that in the first talk delivered on November 28, 1930, there is a mention of *Herald* on page 80. This suggests that by this date, the *Herald* had already been written, though its publication will await until 1933. Even more interesting is that in April 1935, while writing the prologue and referring to the need to destroy the original version of the "last book," Gurdjieff finds it necessary to remind his readers about his having written three years before (1933) a book called *The Herald of Coming Good* intended originally for a specific audience of his pupils (L:49). Complaining about the distribution of that pamphlet having gone out of hand, Gurdjieff then provides his warning not to read it, if they have not already done so, for the sake of his own physical health (L:50).

But perhaps a *more important revelation* in the published Third Series is in regard to Gurdjieff's explicit suggestion that in his efforts to (re)write his last series, he in fact *did not intend to complete it*. That is, he intentionally had decided "to complete" the Third Series by leaving it incomplete. In the introduction to the first book of the Third Series he states:

... several months prior to my last journey to America: namely, when I had finished the exposition in its first draft of all the material which I **had planned to write**, the First Series in its final form, the second in its first version and the third at least partly written. (L:63; bold added)

The "last journey to America" to which Gurdjieff refers in the above passage, written in November 1934, took place in 1933. The key point in the passage is not that Gurdjieff was still working on his series, but that he explicitly states that what he "planned" to write *did not* include a full version of the Third Series. To suggest that the last series remains "incomplete" implies the belief that Gurdjieff indeed intended to complete it. However, if Gurdjieff in fact did not intend to complete the last series, and that for him its "completion" meant its being left "incomplete," then it means Gurdjieff's writing career achieved its intended goals by 1935. This, of course, explains why during the following fifteen years (1935–1949), Gurdjieff did not have a reason to "complete" his writing project further. But this reveals much more, and raises many questions as to why Gurdjieff planned his writings to end in such a seemingly "incomplete" way.⁴

To suggest that Gurdjieff intended to leave the Third Series "incomplete," however, does not mean that he actually did not write it. In this regard, it is important to distinguish between the form and the content of his writings as a whole, and of his Third Series in particular. Giving the Third Series the *appearance* of being incomplete does not mean that it was *substantively* left incomplete. Substantively, Gurdjieff's writing project includes "All and Everything" that he intended to write. In its form, though, it was purposely left incomplete for reasons that remain to be understood.

Can a function of providing incomplete information to eagerly awaiting readers be that of encouraging them to make organizational contact? After all, Gurdjieff, on his deathbed, stated that so long as a nucleus of people is not prepared, the action of ideas may not go beyond a certain threshold (L:xi-xii). There is a definite sense in this statement of the relation between his writings and the extent of contacts to be made with his trained pupils. The incompleteness of a text would naturally generate a desire in the interested reader to consult the organization that constituted the source of that information. Incompleteness of the text would then be an effective recruitment strategy to draw interested readers into the circle. By giving only *incomplete* pieces of leather to his pupils, he made it *seem* impossible for them to make their own shoes out of the material, short of additional information and organizational contacts to be made. This is of course also in line with the advice given by Gurdjieff elsewhere (Ouspensky 1949:132)), that to properly work on oneself, a school is necessary.

In regard to the possible function of incompleteness of writing as a way of encouraging organizational contacts, one may also wonder where the missing information might be? Where they actually written and perhaps inserted elsewhere in Gurdjieff's writings? What, or where, are the missing "fragments" of the Third Series? Where are the missing two books/chapters?

A close examination of patterns in Gurdjieff's writing practice, as represented in Figure 6.1, indicates that he tended to use material generated through his lectures and earlier drafts for his later writings. For example, parts of Gurdjieff's early prospectus for the Institute, written around 1921, was later incorporated into the concluding, "From the Author," chapter of the First Series, and also into his *Herald*. Or his talk delivered in New York City in January 1924 is later incorporated into the last, "From the Author," chapter of his First Series. These are indicated by arrows in Figure 6.1. The question arises as to whether two other pieces of writing, one later titled

4. In her foreword to the Third Series, Jeanne de Salzmann suggests that Gurdjieff suddenly and completely stopped writing on April 2nd, 1935 (L:ix). This is of course technically incorrect, given Gurdjieff's own narrative in the book. Gurdjieff was still trying to finish the "last chapter" into the April 10, and even April 14, when he found his favorite article in the Russian newspaper (L:161).

“The Material Question,” and the other the withdrawn *Herald*, were intended for incorporation into his overall series.

Translators of the Second Series tell us that “The Material Question,” which is included as a separate chapter at the end of the Second Series, “was not originally intended for this book” (M:xi). Obviously, given that the First Series had already been finished by 1930 to Gurdjieff’s full satisfaction, “The Material Question” does not belong to the First Series. In matters of form, if not in substance, one can see why “The Material Question” may not have been originally intended for the Second Series. It breaks from the overall style of a series/book that is designed in the format of introducing remarkable personalities Gurdjieff met in his early life. Following an introduction, chapters are titled in turn after these remarkable men. Another possibility is that “The Material Question” was intended to be a chapter in the Third Series. This is perhaps why we find Gurdjieff sitting in the Child’s Cafe in New York City, in April 1931, busy revising this particular text, having already prepared the drafts of the First and Second Series (M:297–303). This is exactly the period he was working on his Third Series.

Strictly speaking, one cannot say for certain whether Gurdjieff originally intended “The Material Question” to be included in the Second or Third Series. In *Herald* (p. 25) Gurdjieff makes a reference to the fact that he had already described the “initial difficulties in establishing the Institute in Russia and other places” partly in the “third book of the second series” and partly in the “first book of the third series.” We know of course that those “initial difficulties” are the prime subject matter of the piece of writing later titled “The Material Question”; Gurdjieff’s remarks hint at the possibility that the essay may have been originally considered to be a part of either the Second or the Third Series. But, it may also be, and appears to be, the case that Gurdjieff may have finally decided after all not to include the “Material Question” in the Second Series. Whatever Gurdjieff’s original or final intention regarding the placement of the essay in the series may have been, however, the issue is not as significant as noting for now that he considered that essay to be a part of his overall writing portfolio.

Before elaborating further on the nature of this potential chapter of the Third Series, let us look for the other missing chapter.

Other than “The Material Question” the most important and substantial piece of writing that was apparently being written independently of Gurdjieff’s series as a whole was *The Herald of Coming Good*. As indicated above, it is most likely that Gurdjieff had already written this piece by 1930, since a reference to it appears in his first talk comprising what later came to be designated by him as the first book of the Third Series. But even if we consider it finally written during the 1932–1933 period, there is a strong possibility that not only it was intended to be the other missing

book/chapter of the Third Series, but in fact its most important and final, concluding piece. It is true that in the prologue to the Third Series, Gurdjieff refers to the chapter on "The Outer and Inner World of Man" as being the "last" chapter of the Third Series; but it is important to consider two points: (1) Gurdjieff himself refers again, while writing that "last" chapter itself, that he in fact considered it his "second chapter" (L:161); and (2) even if the mentioned chapter indeed was the "last" chapter, this should be understood as meaning that it was the last only of what was explicitly incorporated by him into the body of his Third Series—it is indeed the last piece of what has today been published as the (incomplete) "Third Series."

The hypothesis that "The Material Question" and *Herald* are in fact the missing two books/chapters of the Third Series becomes more plausible if we consider that the Third Series deals with the practical dimensions of Gurdjieff's teaching, especially those involving the organization of the Institute. The two missing pieces clearly fall in this category, providing crucial and indispensable historical and practical material on the subject. They were both composed during a period when Gurdjieff had already written the final or draft versions of the First and Second Series. And they are both referred to in the actually published Third Series we have today: Gurdjieff refers to *Herald* in the prologue and in the first talk, and in substance to the material question in terms of the "economic question" (L:75) facing the Institute, having made a reference (L:74–75) to the Institute's background as previously explicated in its program.

Of most significance is the consideration of *Herald* as a part, and indeed the last and final book of the Third Series. It would indeed be "comical" to discover that the only piece of writing Gurdjieff himself published and later disclaimed was intended by him to be later resurrected as the most important "summarizing-concluding" book of his Third Series, i.e., the "tenth part" of all his three series as a whole:

I shall without fail explain it, for in all this there is not only much that is instructive but also such comicality that, if all the wits got together to think it up, they could not think up even the **tenth part of it.** (L:52–53; bold added)

Gurdjieff writes the above passage at a crucial point in his prologue to the Third Series, immediately following his "advice" to his pupils not to read *Herald*, and leading up to the "legominisms" from the ancient days" that ends the text of the prologue (49–56). This important passage begins with Gurdjieff's efforts trying to explain how he went about rewriting the Third Series "with an entirely new content" (L:49). For this purpose he finds it necessary to make a digression to the writing and publication of the *Herald*. Having described briefly the reasons for writing, and later withdrawing, *Herald*, Gurdjieff then makes a rather long digression again to his

fundamentally “inner-wealth”-generating pedagogical technique of pressing “the most sensitive corn of everyone I met” (L:51) and how and why it was so effective in the “general crisis” period of the world war/revolutionary situation, followed up with a discussion of his friends and “enemies,” and finally with the aforementioned “legominism.” I will reexamine this important passage shortly, but my purpose of raising this issue here is to suggest that this passage in particular indicates how the publication of *Herald* and the (re)writing of the Third Series were interrelated episodes in Gurdjieff’s writing project as far as the Third Series is concerned.

Consideration of *Herald* as the last chapter of the Third Series brings all of Gurdjieff’s writings full circle back to the beginning. *Herald* is devoted, among other crucial aims, to the announcement of the imminent publication of all of Gurdjieff’s writings, starting with the First Series. In it is given crucial background information about the origins of Gurdjieff’s teaching, purpose, and writings as a whole. It even includes the title page and table of contents of the then soon-to-be-published First Series. *Herald* sounds the higher DO in the greater musical octave of Gurdjieff’s writings as a whole. It is the head of serpent swallowing its own tail. It is the alpha and the omega of his writing materials. It is therefore also where the cycle of reading his writings as whole should actually begin, and end.

Consideration of “The Material Question” and especially *Herald* as the missing chapters/books of the Third Series provides important keys to the demystification, and indeed resolution, of fundamental questions about the origins, nature, and objectives of Gurdjieff’s life and teaching.

Aside from the matter of “comicality,” involving Gurdjieff’s “scatterbrained trick[s]” (L:46) of fragmenting the Third Series into apparently independent and seemingly incomplete pieces, what is it that is so “instructive” about this whole final effort on the part of Gurdjieff to resurrect his *Herald* from the ashes of disclaimers and circulation withdrawals?

Let us pretend⁵ that the published version of the Third Series together with “The Material Question” and *Herald* altogether constitute what was originally meant to be the Third Series. What do these books/chapters tell us, substantively, about Gurdjieff’s final, “instructive” and practical, teaching left for his posterity? How do these pieces of writing relate to the common title of the Third Series: *Life Is Real Only Then, When “I Am”*? How do they fulfill the central purpose predetermined by Gurdjieff for the Third Series:

5. It is important to note here that whether the reader agrees with my conjecture, that the two pieces of writing mentioned were intended to be missing fragments of the Third Series, does not undermine the legitimacy of studying their contents under the common title of Third Series in this chapter.

THIRD SERIES: To assist the arising, in the mentation and in the feelings of the reader, of a veritable, nonfantastic representation not of that illusory world which he now perceives, but of the world existing in reality. (B:v)

From the outset, we need to remember that Gurdjieff meant the Third Series to be exclusively exposed to the "esoteric" groups of his pupils, that is, to those who have moved beyond the mere "club" or "exoteric" and the "mesoteric" and intellectual phases of the teaching, committing themselves to the practical aspects of the teaching:⁶

Acquaintance with the contents of the Third Series of my writings is permitted only to those people who, besides having a thorough knowledge of the ideas exposed in the two previous series, have already begun to manifest themselves and to react to other people's manifestations in strict accordance with my indications set forth in the previous series of my writings. (H:57)

It follows from the above that the intended audience for the Third Series were those who had already been attracted to Gurdjieff's teaching. They were already part of the inner circle, though perhaps not yet completely informed of everything he had intended to pass on to them by then. Assisting the arising of a nonfantastic and non-illusive view in the mentation and feeling of readers, as specified in the statement of purpose of the Third Series, in other words, is not aimed at people outside the Gurdjieff "circle" but those inside it. In the First Series, Gurdjieff aims to initiate his more advanced pupils into important practical and "real life" aspects of his teaching not otherwise covered in his earlier series of philosophical and theoretical instructions. It is this intended audience of the Third Series that leads the dying Gurdjieff to tell his eldest pupil that publishing the Third Series is "not necessary" and that it was written for "another purpose." It did not need to be "published" since it had already been available to the audience for whom it was written, and it was already serving this other purpose. Nevertheless, Gurdjieff's deathbed directive is flexible enough to allow for the wider publication, if such wider audiences are also generated as a result of activities of the "responsible nucleus."

What did these new "instructions," or one may say, initiations or revelations, in the Third Series consist of?

The Prologue: Confessions of the Grand Hypnotist

The first big "shock" administered by Gurdjieff in the Third Series happens right at the beginning, in the prologue, where he recalls an important life-

6. Gurdjieff is consistent in this policy regarding the distribution of *Herald* itself; that is, he does insist in it, and also in the prologue to the Third Series (H:49), that *Herald* was intended for a limited circle of his close followers and those associated with them.

changing reasoning he conducted back in 1902 on the edge of the Gobi Desert. This event was taking place while Gurdjieff was recovering from a stray bullet wound during a period when he was giving himself out as a “healer-hypnotist.” The self-reasoning involved considerable remorse of conscience, full of despair in having often failed in finding a way to remember his higher self, thereby succumbing to desires of the flesh. Before moving on, let us read Gurdjieff’s own words in this confession:

... My God! Is it possible that I will have to experience again all that I lived through during periods of my fully collected active state, for the half-year before this last misfortune of mine?

Not only to experience feelings alternating, almost regularly, between remorse for the inner and outer manifestations of my ordinary waking state, and loneliness, disappointment, satiety, and the rest, but primarily to be everywhere haunted by the fear of “inner emptiness”?

What also have I not done, what resources have I not exhausted in my determination to reach a state where the functioning of my psyche in my usual waking state would flow in accordance with the previous instructions of my active consciousness, but all in vain!

In my past life, being forever merciless to my natural weaknesses, and almost all the time jealously keeping watch over myself, I could attain almost anything within the limits of man’s possibilities, and in some fields attained even to such a degree of power as not one man, perhaps not even in any epoch, had ever attained ...

... At the same time, in spite of all my desires and endeavors, I could not succeed in “remembering myself” in the process of my general common life with others so as to be able to manifest myself, not according to my nature but according to the previous instructions of my “collected consciousness.”

I could not attain the state of “remembering myself” even sufficiently to hinder the associations flowing in me automatically from certain undesirable hereditary factors of my nature.

As soon as the accumulation of energy which enabled me to be in an active state was exhausted, at once associations of both thoughts and feelings began to flow in the direction of objects diametrically opposite to the ideals of my consciousness.

When I found myself in a state of complete dissatisfaction with food and sex, the leading factors of these associations of mine appeared to be primarily vindictiveness and, in a state of full satisfaction, they proceeded on a theme of the forthcoming pleasure of a meal and sex or of the gratification of self-love, vanity, pride, jealousy and other passions.

I thought deeply myself and tried to find out from others about the reasons for such a terrible situation within my inner world, but could not clarify anything at all. ... (L:19–21; italics in the original)

Gurdjieff's confession, of course, is projected back to 1902, when he was himself learning to heal others (and himself?) through hypnotism. It is a matter of the past, so to speak. What follows Gurdjieff's confession in the text, however, is of more interest for two reasons: 1-it suggests that Gurdjieff in fact did find a way to overcome his confessed weaknesses, and therefore allegedly leave them behind; and 2-that he adopted a policy in his life in regard to hypnotism of not using it ever for egotistical aims. This development in his self-reasoning is briefly as follows.

For Gurdjieff, the root of the problem for the continuation of his vices and weaknesses boiled down to the problem of not being able to "remember himself," i.e., his higher self, the self that he desired to be amid the multiplicities of selves populating his inner world. Searching for a solution, he begins to learn from a parallel situation where he perceives how God, at *His* level, has dealt with the same problem; i.e., he arrives at a new valuation of why God sent out from Himself one of his "beloved sons" as the Devil. This constant reminder to God of the existence of the Devil hints at a decisive solution to Gurdjieff's own dilemma. By deciding not to ever more use his "consciously developed" powers of telepathy and hypnotism for his egotistical aims and vices, he has externalized a factor from within himself that will forever, in his life, remind him to remember himself. Given the significance of this passage, let us reread it here (in abbreviated form):

He is God of all the world, and also of my outer world.

I am God also, although only of my inner world.

He is God, and I am God! ...

... But how could I have failed to notice such a startling analogy?

I had thought so much about world creation and world maintenance, and in general about God and His deeds; and also had discoursed with many others about all these matters; but never once had there come to my mind this simple thought.

And yet, it could not be otherwise.

Everything, without exception, all sound logic as well as all historical data, reveal and affirm that God represents absolute goodness; He is all-loving and all-forgiving. He is the just pacifier of all that exists.

At the same time why should He, being as He is, send away from Himself one of His nearest, by Him animated, beloved sons, only for the "way of pride" proper to any young and still incompletely formed individual, and bestow upon him a force equal but opposite to His own? I refer to the "Devil."

This idea illuminated the condition of my inner world like the sun, and rendered it obvious that in the great world for the possibility of harmonious construction

there was inevitably required some kind of continuous perpetuation of the reminding factor.

For this reason our Maker Himself, in the name of all that He had created, was compelled to place one of His beloved sons in such an, in the objective sense, invidious situation.⁷

Therefore I also have now for my small inner world to create out of myself, from some factor beloved by me, an alike unending source.

There arises now a question like this:

What is there contained in my general presence which, if I should remove it from myself, would always in my various general states be reminding me of itself?

Thinking and thinking, I came to the conclusion that if I should intentionally stop utilizing the exceptional power in my possession which had been developed by me consciously in my common life with people, then there must be forced out of me such a reminding source.

Namely, the power based upon strength in the field of "hanbledzoin," or, as it would be called by others, the power of telepathy and hypnotism.

Thanks mainly to this my inherency, developed in me by myself, I, in the process of general life, especially for the last two years, had been spoiled and depraved to the core, so that most likely this would remain for all my life.

And so, if consciously I would deprive myself of this grace of my inherency, then undoubtedly always and in everything its absence would be felt.

I take an oath to remember never to make use of this inherency of mine and thereby to deprive myself from satisfying most of my vices. In the process of living together with others, this beloved inherency will always be a reminder for me. (L:23–25; italics in the original)

7. I will come back later to the issue of whether in the passage quoted (L:23–25) Gurdjieff contradicts his earlier views as expounded in the First Series about the problem of the "Devil" and nonexistence of an objective "evil." Suffice it to say here that this in itself may be considered a new "shock" or revelation on its own. In other words, the objective existence of "Beelzebub" in the First Series had not necessarily indicated his role as an objective force equal to God but opposite in its charge. Beelzebub was simply another of God's angels, radical and fiery in youth, to be sure, but repentant and conforming in old age, manifesting compassion and benevolence throughout the tales. The "Devil" Gurdjieff speaks about in the above passage, however, despite having been a "beloved son," plays a different role, and has an objectively opposite charge than the all-goodness of God. But, let us leave this matter here for now.

What appears in the above passage to be another important revelation about Gurdjieff himself, is also that Gurdjieff, at least in the past, had used his hypnotic powers to satisfy "to the core" his personal vices. Of what these consisted, we of course have only hints. But let us leave this revelation also behind. After all, Gurdjieff is making a confession. And such vices, and misuses of psychic powers, let us assume, became a matter of the past, in light of Gurdjieff's newfound technique of self-remembering.

Of significance in the above passage is how Gurdjieff viewed the legitimacy of using his hypnotic powers in the future. The implications of the oath Gurdjieff takes during that intense self-reasoning is that Gurdjieff would never use again his hypnotic powers for *personal and egotistical aims*. Here an "image" is constructed of a man, previously "depraved to the core," but now repentant and remorseful, possessing enormous hypnotic powers, who decides to give them up as a means of perpetually remembering himself out of his dark past. The new Gurdjieff in this image is one that would never use hypnotism for egotistical gains.

What follows Gurdjieff's recalled passage of self-reasoning, however, contains even more important aspects of the new "image" being constructed, for even that self-reasoning, it seems, is immediately followed up with an important qualification:

It all ended thus, that I decided to take an oath before my own essence, in a state of mind known to me, never again to make use of this property of mine.

I must also mention that, when I took the oath not to apply in life this inherency of mine, I made a reservation that my oath should not concern the application of it for scientific purposes.

For instance, I was very much interested then, and even now my interest has not entirely vanished, in increasing the visibility of distant cosmic centers many thousand times through the use of a medium, and in the cure of cancer⁸ by the power of suggestion. (L:26)

8. The use of hypnosis to cure cancer seems obvious as a possible "scientific" aim. The other example, as absurd as it seems, is very instructive, understanding which can give many clues about Gurdjieff's reasons for the logical order of his writings and prescribed readings. Suffice it to say here that while, absurdly, the first image that comes to mind is that of doing "astronomical" work, what Gurdjieff may really mean by "cosmic centers" could simply be other "Tetartocosmic" beings such as his fellow human beings. After all, if we have already read the First Series, *and only if we have done so first*, could we regard the human organism as a "cosmic center." Without such an order of reading beginning from the First Series, this statement could obviously seem absurd. But, once read in light of Gurdjieff's cosmology as delineated in the First Series, what Gurdjieff is stating here is, again, that of using hypnosis to access the psyche of others, in this case, indirectly, through the use of mediums subjected to hypnosis. The hypnotic technique provides Gurdjieff with a tool that allows him to see a thousand times more clearly the inner nature of other human beings, near or distant. Adam Crabtree (1985, 1993) provides ample evidence of how during the period from the time of Mesmer to early twentieth century, particularly during the period that would correspond to Gurdjieff's lifetime and particularly around the time he was variously preoccupied as a "professional hypnotist," there were highly prevalent uses of "mediums" in practices of hypnosis. "As more and more people became involved in these experiments," Crabtree writes, "Spiritualism developed into a full-fledged religious movement. Its heros and heroines were the great mediums who could manifest the presence of spirits by producing extraordinary psychic phenomena. They were the ones who maintained a high profile before the public—who proved for anyone willing to see that the dead live on" (1985:69).

The image that is constructed now takes an important turn. Here the oath is qualified with the exception that it would be permissible for Gurdjieff to use his hypnotic powers for “scientific purposes.” Noteworthy here are the examples of such permitted use under the general label of “scientific purposes”; these include what appears to be “astronomical” and medical practices. Would Gurdjieff use hypnotism in his teaching practice? Does he consider his own teaching as a “scientific” endeavor? Of course he does—take, for instance, his comment only 20 pages later when he cites as one of his “self-imposed aims” that of service “to science, that is, to all humanity” (L:54), by which he means his teaching and not just simply medical healing, as he seems to imply in his qualified statement quoted above.

But the kinds of examples he cites in that statement are obviously constructed so as not to immediately conjure up the idea that what Gurdjieff had considered to be misuses of hypnotism has anything to do with the teaching itself, but involved, as he actually emphasized, misuses of a “personal” nature. These, he takes an oath never to do again. But nothing in his self-reasoning, and the resolution he reaches, suggests that he in any way questions the legitimacy of using hypnotism in his teaching practice.

That Gurdjieff considered his teaching to be a scientific practice, involving “observation,” “experimentation,” theorization, etc., is indisputable. As we have seen, there is abundant evidence in his writings to substantiate this claim. A direct acknowledgment of this in conjunction with his hypnotic practice is most explicitly made in the very piece of writing, the only published piece of his writing during his lifetime, that he later disclaimed and withdrew from circulation: *Herald*.

The Shock of the “Tenth Part of It”: *The Herald of Coming Good*

What was in *Herald* that made it such an exception to all his writings? Was it its language, style of writing, long sentences, etc.? Was it his extravagant claim of planning to install a new “Gymnasium,” of “independent laboratories,” of unheard achievements of “modern science” “Magnetic-Astral,” “Thoughtanbledzoin,” and “Mentaloethero-winged” artifacts, etc.⁹ But, this style was already too familiar to readers of Gurdjieff, especially of his First Series. They already knew of his style of writing and exposition, using artificially created words and long sentences. In fact, for any unbiased reader of Gurdjieff’s writings, I think there is hardly any

9. Interestingly, in the passage in *Herald* where he introduces this extravagant plans for the new Institute he was planning to reinvigorate, Gurdjieff also mentions devices particularly reminiscent of the passage on “scientific purposes” just cited above from the prologue of the Third Series: “astronomical observatory fitted out with all devices for applying all the laws known on Earth in various ages for the refraction and reflection of rays and for the magnifying of the visibility by means of mediumistic properties” (H:85).

evidence that would support the view that *Herald's* style of writing is any more problematic than the rest of Gurdjieff's writings already finished by then. In parts, in my view, *Herald* reads more lucidly and matter-of-factly than Gurdjieff's First Series.

The "shock" of *Herald* was administered more on the substantive level than merely through stylistic excitations.

In *Herald* Gurdjieff moves beyond simply acknowledging the significance of hypnotism in his lifelong search for the sense and significance of organic and human life on Earth; beyond affirming his substantial knowledge of, training in, and practice of hypnotism as a "healer-hypnotist"; and beyond admitting to having used hypnotism on his "guinea-pig" subjects in the Russian theosophical movement. In *Herald*, Gurdjieff for the first time explicitly confesses to having been applying his hypnotic knowledge and skills on his *current* pupils and followers in the course of building his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man. This proved to be too hard a pill to swallow at the time.

But there was even more in *Herald*, subconsciously woven into its subtext. And this was similar to what Gurdjieff again does later when he reminisces his 1902 self-reasoning and oath-taking episode in the prologue to the Third Series in 1935. In *Herald* (published in 1933) by suggesting that the twenty one year period of his self-imposed "artificial life," begun in 1912, has finally ended (in 1933), he again preconditions his readers' "mentation" to believing that even if he had recently used his hypnotic knowledge and power for building his Institute—and for this he amply provides justifications and reassurances of good will in his text—this practice will not be continued thereafter. The "herald" of his coming new writings is thereby the herald of coming *good*, and not "evil."

Gurdjieff's intention of revealing to his followers his having used his hypnotic powers for recruiting and teaching purposes is written all over *Herald*. But let us follow Gurdjieff as he builds his new persona in *Herald*.

In the opening "circular letter," which Gurdjieff obligates especially his long-time pupils to read before the book itself, he reminds them of all that they owe him for their acquired knowledge and "self-valuation" (H:81), suggesting that they have also served him "without their knowledge"

... as objects of my observations and investigations of the processes going on in them of crystallization and decrystallisation of those psychic factors, the transformation of which for the acquiring of subjectivised manifestation demands a comparatively lengthy period. (H:82)

It is important to note the reference to the "psychic factor" in the above passage—it also appears at the end of the very opening (rather long) paragraph of *Herald*—for it is the heart of what *Herald* aims to reveal. The inner meaning of the above passage is that Gurdjieff has, without his

students' knowledge, been busy crystallizing and then (allegedly) decrystallizing his hypnotic influence in their psyche in order, first to fulfill his own "scientific" objectives, and second, in the meantime, to help them acquire the conditions necessary for the development of their "real Being" (H:81, 82). Gurdjieff here explicitly states his dual aim of subjecting pupils to hypnosis while also making it possible for them to decrystallize its effects.

Gurdjieff is concerned about why what he has been, unknown to his students, crystallizing in their psyche over a rather long period has not yet been decrystallized in order to make way for the development of their real being. So, he considers it his "moral duty" to embark on this decrystallization, even if "automatically," so as to lay the path for their further growth:

I consider it my moral duty to add here that these observations and investigations of mine in the past cannot henceforth serve as the reason why these people, who have served as the objects of my investigation, should now have lost the possibility of entering together with others upon the true path and of attaining—by the help of my detailed and written explanations—to real Being. (H:82)

The above statement, written around in 1932–3, comes in the aftermath of two years' observation by Gurdjieff of the "strange peculiarities" emerging in his elder or young pupil's psyche—ones that he has found to be undesirable for his aims. In other words, he is confronted with the results of his hypnotic crystallizations in their psyche, and now he is concerned about finding ways to decrystallize those "consequences" for the attainment of his aims. It is for this reason that in this "circular letter" Gurdjieff aims to implant in their psyche another "factor," an "automatic factor" that would help his students recognize that: first, what had been done to them had been done for the sake of furthering "objective science" and no malice was intended on the part of Gurdjieff on this account; and second, that they could lead themselves out of the circle of "psychic factors" created for that purpose in the service of attaining their real being:

For **the automatic elimination** from the general entity of the above-mentioned people of all **psychic factors**, capable of impeding the whole hearted devotion of self to newly based work for the attainment of the predetermined Higher Being, which must necessarily be kin to man, and for the elimination likewise of some resulting and so-called "bitter-dregs" in relation to me as a personality, I think it is necessary to say only the following: —

Believe me, during the whole period of my relations with you, my inner world never harboured either egotistical or altruistic impulses, and there existed only always and in everything, the exclusive desire to prepare in all perfection for the future generations the science of the "Objective-Truth-Of-Reality". (H:82; emphasis in bold added)

Notice in the above the use of the term "automatic." This suggests that even as Gurdjieff was making an effort here to "decrystallize" the consequences of all his past efforts to hypnotize his followers into his teaching, he still believed and found it necessary to do this over and above their conscious awareness and intentional awareness, i.e., automatically.

The above passages, alone, clearly point to the significance of *Herald* for revealing Gurdjieff's aims in his latest writings (Third Series?)¹⁰ to bring his students out of the "illusions" they had been led to by Gurdjieff himself for the purpose of attaining his "objective scientific" aims. But there is much more detailed explications of this aim of *Herald* in the book itself.

At the very outset of the book, Gurdjieff reminds his readers that the book was being written on the very day when almost all of his writings in final (First Series) or draft (other series) form had been completed (H:11), and, "coincidentally," his twenty-one-year period of "artificial life" had ended (H:11–12). As will be seen, the whole of the exposition that follows these initial statements is an effort on the part of Gurdjieff to explain, and justify, why and how he adopted such an "artificial life" program.

At the center of the "program" of this "artificial life"—as will be seen—was an effort to apply his hypnotic powers for the purpose of elucidating and discovering certain "objective truths" about human types. What justified such a project on moral grounds, as Gurdjieff later will inform his readers, was that in his view, as a by-product of such an effort on his part, those "objects" of his study would acquire data and information necessary for the evolution of their being. It is important to note here that by calling his twenty-one-year period of life "artificial," "absolutely unnatural life," and "absolutely irreconcilable" with his own mature character traits (H:12), Gurdjieff "automatically" and subtextually conveys to his readers the view that he, in actuality, did not like in good conscience to do what he did during the twenty one years—but nevertheless he did it for "objective scientific" reasons and in the interest of "future generations" (H:82).

In regard to the reasons for adopting such an "artificial" life, Gurdjieff presents, in his own peculiar language, two causes derived from the study of similar past experiences of others: 1-to prevent hatred of common people toward himself to the point of destroying his work and life; 2-to prevent their over-infatuation with him to the point of losing their personal initiative, of which he was particularly in need. Let us read Gurdjieff's peculiar language in the passage pertaining to the above explanations:

10. The references to "practical counsel" and "practical import" (H:10), of acquiring "real being," of decrystallizing "psychic factor," etc., leave no doubt that, if not in form, in substance *Herald* was aimed at accomplishing exactly what the Third Series aimed to accomplish in terms of providing practical information to the more advanced followers of Gurdjieff. Substantively, in other words, *Herald* clearly belongs to the Third Series.

This protracted and, for me, absolutely unnatural life, absolutely irreconcilable, too, in every way with the traits that had entrenched themselves in my individuality by the time of my maturity, was the direct consequence of my decision, founded upon the results of my previous study of a whole series of historic precedents with a view, first of all—to preventing, by to a certain degree unnatural outward manifestations of myself, the formation, in relation to me, of that already noted from ancient times “something”, which, as was set out by our ancestors, forms itself by a natural process in the communal life of people as an outcome of a conjunction of the evil actions of so-called “common people” and leads to the destruction of both him that tries to achieve something for general human welfare and of all that he has already accomplished to this end. Secondly, with a view, to counteracting the manifestation in people with whom I came in contact of that inherent trait which, embedded as it is in the psyche of people and acting as an impediment to the realization of my aims, evolves from them, when confronted with other more or less prominent people, the functioning of the feeling of enslavement, paralysing once and for all their capacity for displaying the personal initiative of which I then stood in particular need. (H:12)

In order to explain the reasons behind adopting such “artificial” measures to protect himself from the foreseen extreme conditions of hatred or cult of his personality, Gurdjieff finds it necessary to go back to the period before this twenty-one-year period and explain how the essential question of his life became, thanks to the “will of fate” or “the inscrutable laws of heredity” (H:13), ingrained in his being as an “irresistible Mania” (H:13). Gurdjieff is particularly emphatic on when his “irresistible striving” began, that is, the period of transition from preparatory to responsible age (H:13).¹¹

Gurdjieff suggests that given certain peculiar features inculcated by his father and his first tutor in his childhood, which caused him to always seek to understand the essence of things, he was instinctively driven upon approaching his responsible age, and especially confronted with the reality of death “of an intimate friend” (H:14), to go beyond ordinary explanations of life and death as suggested to him by the elders surrounding him. This led to his formulating the central question of his life early on:

... to understand clearly the precise significance, in general, of the life process on earth of all the outward forms of breathing creatures and, in particular, of the aim of human life in the light of this interpretation. (H:13)

11. Later in the same passage above Gurdjieff suggests that a “restless factor reminding me automatically of the aim I had set myself was persistently active in my Being in almost every psychic state” (H:16). It is particularly important to explore (as I shall in the next chapter) this matter in terms of the link between Gurdjieff’s interest in questions of life and death with the problem of human (and Gurdjieff’s own) sexuality, especially in the context of his transition from preparatory to responsible age.

Calling the "irresistible striving" to find an answer to the above question a "psychic factor" (H:15), Gurdjieff hints that what had been intentionally, or even accidentally, inculcated in him by his elders was a form of hypnotic influence. The very "irresistible" nature of such a "psychic" factor, deeply penetrating the very "marrow-of-my-bones" itself interested Gurdjieff a great deal, and he sought an answer to the formation of such "undesirable impulses" (H:15) that rendered him out of control of himself:

The degree of fusion with my Being and the dominating influence on my psyche of this peculiar factor were such, that, after four or five years, I fell completely under its power, and since then it has, like an "itching-itch", constantly compelled the whole of me or the separate parts of my general individuality, cost what it may, to elucidate everything for the cognition of all which can serve for the final solution of these, for me, cardinal question.

Having become in my inner life, in the full sense of the word, a slave of such "aim", obviously instilled by the Will of Fate in my entirety, from that time onwards, first compelled only by it, and shortly afterwards also stimulated quite often by my own consciousness, I lived absorbed in these researches until the year 1892. (H:16)

Having arrived at no answers to his questions by that date, Gurdjieff retires to two dervish monasteries for several days and, after a period of wandering, seeks for two years to gain an all-round knowledge about the human subconscious and the "ancient" science of which contemporaries know only a minor part, namely the science of hypnotism. Since we have already elaborated on this period of Gurdjieff's life in Chapter Five as part of an overview of Gurdjieff's textual biography (further details of which can be found in the Appendix), I will not dwell on it again here in detail. Suffice it to say that *Herald* provides the first, and only, account of Gurdjieff's life during this "missing" period, and in this sense it is *undoubtedly the most important and primary biographical source on Gurdjieff's life*.

Of more interest to us at this point of our exploration is what happened after Gurdjieff's theoretical discoveries about the human subconscious mind and hypnotism. In order to practically verify, and further advance, his theoretical findings, Gurdjieff spent almost four to five years giving himself out as a "healer." Based on an analysis of his textual biography, the date of this period must have been around 1902–6, a period least known about his life but hints of its significance for him can be found, outwardly, in his story of being wounded twice, and inwardly, in his remorseful self-reasoning already narrated earlier in this chapter. Following this "healer" period, after about two years of traveling and "wandering," Gurdjieff decides to give himself out as a "professor-instructor" among the theosophists who already found in him a person with vast knowledge and experience in spiritual matters:

... I began to observe and study various manifestations in the waking state of the psyche of these trained and freely moving “Guinea-Pigs”, allotted to me by Destiny for my experiments. (H:22)

Referring to these and later his own formed groupings as his “circles” (H:22), Gurdjieff then decided that neither they, nor those he found in various towns in an ad hoc fashion, provided him with a sufficient sampling of human “types” to carry out his experiments. So, by 1911–12 he had already decided to form a permanent organization to pursue basically the same ends, only on a more structured and organized way. I say ‘basically the same ends’ because there is nothing in Gurdjieff’s text indicating that substantively what he aimed to do during the earlier organizing period was essentially any different than what he hoped to accomplish on a more permanent basis through the “Institute-For-Man’s-Harmonious-Development-according-to-the-system-of-G. Gurdjieff” (H:23):

Realising during the second year of the existence of these [pre-Institute period] groups organized by me that, under the prevailing conditions, I would not be able to have at my disposal, for a period long enough for my observations, the representatives of all the types, and while continuing to direct these groups, on the one hand, observing and studying the material already available, and, on the other, satisfying as conscientiously as possible those in whose psyche the passion of curiosity was deeply rooted, and impartially destroying in those others, in whom the predisposition proper to all men for acquiring real “Being” was not yet atrophied, all their former illusions and erroneous ideals, in this way preparing, in all events, possible assistants for me in the future, I began periodically to ponder again in order to find still the possibility of creating such conditions as would allow me to satisfy at last this extraordinary and accidentally roused need of mine. (H:23)

It is after these deliberations that Gurdjieff decides to found the Institute. The arranged meeting of Gurdjieff with P. D. Ouspensky, who would play a crucial role in the establishment of his Institute, takes place two years from this decision (in 1915). It is also important to note that it was in 1911, Gurdjieff will tell us in *Herald*, that he arranged with a certain monastery in Asia for the exchange of qualified students in return for their proper “training” (H:59–60).

Having established his real aim of founding the Institute, with which most of *Herald*’s current audience had been affiliated with, Gurdjieff finds it necessary to qualify his decision to “use” them by evoking his principles of “objective justice,” and he presents this as a recollection of self-reasoning that he went through as he was making the decision to found the Institute:

To make use of people, who display a special interest in an Institute founded by me, for purely personal ends would surely strike those around me as a

manifestation of "egoism", but at the same time the people, who had anything to do with such an Institute established by me, those, namely, whom I have previously mentioned and in whom the predisposition proper to all men,—that of acquiring data and of preparing in their being the soil for the impulse of "objective-conscience" and for the formation of so-called "essential-prudence"—had not yet entirely atrophied, could, in this way alone, profit by the results of knowledge amassed by me due to exceptional circumstances of my life, and which had regard to nearly all the aspects of reality and objective truth, and thus use them for their own benefit. (H:24)¹²

Gurdjieff then inserts long passages from his original prospectus for the Institute, dealing with the problem of fragmentation of human psyche into three separate centers—making the organism vulnerable to outside "influences"—and then briefly describes the situations that led to the eventual establishment of the Institute in France in 1921 and his decision to close it in 1924 in the aftermath of his auto accident.¹³

Important to stress here is that for Gurdjieff the so-called "psychic factor" as mentioned in *Herald* is the same "organ Kundabuffer" (and its "consequences") as explicated in his First Series, that is, the human suggestibility and propensity to be hypnotized:

For the moment I shall limit myself to mentioning only general information concerning this psychic factor inherent in everyone, which I have verified and elucidated in every possible way, and which amazed me, after appearing to be, at first, relatively insignificant. Later, I shall speak in detail of this factor, as well as of means established by me as a result of my experimental elucidatory methods, which would modify and even destroy completely this undesirable factor with all its consequences. (H:63)

Gurdjieff's bringing up this issue aims to set the readers' minds on a course that would render any inconsistency between his contempt for that "maleficent organ Kundabuffer" (here called "psychic factor") and his hypnotism of his "objects" in his "circles" appear to be reconcilable. In order to nullify the action of this trait in his subjects (and all humans), that is of suggestibility, that he adopted a critical attitude toward them (H:63), especially during the twenty one year of his "artificial life," the "principle" of

12. Of course, a *very important* consideration for an evaluation of the organizational aspects of Gurdjieff's teaching must be, in light of the above statements, whether the stress on the need for "collective" work in a "school" setting was derived from the essential requirements of learning, or more so from providing conditions for the purpose of Gurdjieff's own "scientific" and "experimental" interests.

13. The passage following these accounts about the Institute, where Gurdjieff presents a background to and introduction to his First Series, is of great significance about Gurdjieff's intentions behind "spreading" his teaching through writing, and to this I shall return in Chapter Eight.

challenging the sense of “vanity” and “self-conceit” in everyone he met (H:63), such that they would be immediately confronted with a situation in which they would not come under Gurdjieff’s hypnotic influence. Let us hear from Gurdjieff himself how he arrived at the need for applying such a “principle” that later he also called stepping on people’s “most sensitive corn” (L:51):

In order to make it clear to all readers and to emphasize its importance, I think it necessary to give the reasons for applying the above-mentioned principle during that period of my life.

Long before that period of my life, when I consciously decided, under special oath, for a definite time to manifest myself and react to the manifestations of the people I met in a certain manner, acting for many years, as I have already noted, as professional hypnotist, although I tried as much as possible, while exercising my profession, to keep under the control of my consciousness the undesirable manifestations of my nature, in spite of this, there gradually formed within me, proceeding far beyond the control of my active consciousness, certain automatic influences upon people around me during their waking as well as their hypnotic state.

On account of this, there soon began to become really perceptible to my awaking consciousness various consequences, irreconcilable with my nature, of this automatic influence over people, which often evoked in me remorse of conscience; and therefore, in working out the programme of my life, which was to be my guiding principle for the future, and of which the fundamental and chief task was that I always, in the course of this predetermined period, in all the inner states of my organism, ought to “cultivate” inwardly and manifest towards everyone I met the feelings of love, pity, benevolence, etc., I also decided to include the above-mentioned principle, because its application to life, although mainly to serve my special aim, constituted, in my opinion, at the same time, a part of my inner benevolence towards people. (H:63–64)

The essence of Gurdjieff’s argument here is that if he had a hypnotic influence on others, it was not conscious and intentional on his part but a result of “automatic” processes emanating from his being, and in order to nullify such influences he resorted to the “principle” of (as he later would call it) “stepping on their corns” while at the same time seeking to heal their inner maladies. From his statement, it becomes clear that in Gurdjieff’s view, his efforts to use his “circles” and the Institute as laboratories for his experimentations must not be confused with a conscious and intentional effort on his part to use hypnotic influence on them. And it is on the account of the “remorse of conscience” resulting from such unintended “psychic factors” in those surrounding him that he had found it necessary to inform them of his background knowledge and experiences in hypnotism.

His purpose in *Herald*, in other words, was to "decrystallize" the unintended consequences of the "psychic factor," i.e., the "organ Kundabuffer," generated as a result of his twenty-year "artificial life," and to begin a new phase of his teaching for which this booklet is a herald of its coming good.

If we consider *Herald* "the tenth part of it," that is, of the ten books comprising his series, it is supposed to serve a *very important* function. It is the vehicle that serves Gurdjieff to erase a part of the Yezidi circle drawn over the course of the previous First, Second, and most of Third Series around his readers. The purpose of the confessions therein is to decrystallize the illusions, and open the minds of the readers, in practical and no-nonsense terms to the influence they had previously been subjected.

In *Herald* Gurdjieff admits three important facts:

- 1-He had considered, all along, during his *entire* twenty-one-year "artificial life" at least, his works among his "circles" and Institute to be "objective scientific" observations and experimentations in human psyche;
- 2-He had "used" his followers not only in his earlier "circles" but also in the Institute to pursue his "objective scientific" observations and investigations, accompanied by the justification that such an effort on his part provided his subjects with the "only" possible way of learning about and benefiting from his knowledge and experience about the human inner life;
- 3-Not only he was aware, with much "remorse of conscience," of his "automatic" hypnotic influence upon those who came to him and worked under his guidance, but also he asserts that he intentionally tried to nullify such "undesirable influences" by consciously and intentionally acting towards them in a critical and "fault-finding" manner. (The last admission, in other words and in effect, suggests that Gurdjieff would have not intentionally and consciously used his hypnotic powers in his scientific experimentations on his followers.)

The key question that arises if we contrast these admissions on Gurdjieff's part in *Herald* with his confession and self-reasoning in 1902 as narrated in the prologue of the Third Series, is this: in what way was his twenty-one-year objective and scientific experimentations with human types exempt from his assertion regarding the admitted permissibility of using hypnotic (and telepathic) powers for "scientific purposes" (as indicated in the prologue)? Ouspensky reports, for example, that he was subjected, admittedly as a result of his own demands for "facts," to Gurdjieff's telepathy to demonstrate the "miraculous" nature of his knowledge and abilities (Ouspensky 1949:261-65). Are Gurdjieff's efforts in *Herald* meant to suggest that in his permissible usages of his hypnotic powers for "scientific purposes," the most central objective of (at least) all the previous twenty one years of his "artificial" life (namely, the study of human psyche

and types through his “circles” and the Institute) was an exception? Did he mean to suggest that he never intended to consciously and intentionally use his hypnotic powers in his (“justifiable”) “use” of his subjects for experimental and scientific purposes? Did he mean to say that if such hypnotic influence took place, it was merely a result of unintentional and “automatic” emanations from his being, and not administered on purpose, consciously and intentionally, upon his subjects? Does this mean that, being concerned with such “automatic” influences, he had devised the stepping on their most “sensitive corns” method as a means of nullifying such influences, and now, through *Herald* he was beginning a new phase of “coming good” through his writings that would provide an hypnosis-free dose of his teaching to humanity?

None of what Gurdjieff asserts in *Herald* he had done were committed, so he asserts, for egotistic purposes, but for the sake of furthering “objective science.” This may align his claim with the oath he had taken in the Gobi Desert in 1902. But note that Gurdjieff’s confessions in *Herald* came *after the fact*, and as such *Herald* (as a “herald” of Gurdjieff’s writings already more or less written and to come) marks a turning point in Gurdjieff’s teaching in the sense that what hypnotism he previously practiced scientifically and unknown to his students during previous years (including his “twenty-one-year artificial life”) is now going to be pursued differently.

Before we examine how Gurdjieff’s new phase of teaching upon finishing *Herald* was aimed at overcoming the supposed “undesirable” consequences of his previous twenty-one-year “artificial life,” a few words about the rest of the Third Series, and its connection to *Herald*, are in order.

Book Nine?: The Orage Crisis and Five Talks

A common element shared by all four books of the Third Series (if we take “The Material Question” and *Herald* to be the missing two books) is the practical demonstration of the enormous power and influence Gurdjieff exerted on his pupils. And a central aspect of this influence was in regard to the “material question.” In fact, a central theme of three of the four books (*Herald*, “The Material Question,” and the five talks compiled as the existing first book of the Third Series) has to do with the problem of acquiring the money and funds for covering Gurdjieff’s life and teaching expenses.

Let us then briefly review each of the other three books besides *Herald*.

The main story of the first five talks of the Third Series involves the relationship between Gurdjieff and his senior pupil, A. R. Orage. In essence, the story goes as follows. After Gurdjieff had his auto accident in 1924 upon his return from his first trip to “America” (during which he had temporarily appointed Orage as his representative) most of the funds covering Gurdjieff’s life and Institute’s expenses arriving from the United

States were collected and channelled through Orage. In the meantime, during the ensuing six years of Gurdjieff's intense literary work, Orage was the central figure in editing the English translations of Gurdjieff's writings. Given the central role played by Orage in Gurdjieff's literary project and funds gathering, he had been highly protective of Orage to the point of discouraging the latter's love affair with Jesse Dwight who Gurdjieff suspected was the main reason for Orage's volunteering to stay in the United States as his representative.

The point was that during the ensuing six years, during Gurdjieff's absence from the United States, not only Orage's following and influence among Gurdjieff's students there had grown, but also, in Gurdjieff's alleged suspicion, not all the funds generated because of his own reputation in United States was being channelled to him. Besides, as Gurdjieff extensively narrates in the five talks of the Third Series, upon his return for a second time to America in 1930, he soon found out that because of the incomplete nature of teaching as received by Orage from him, his followers there had become misguided and on the verge of psychopathological catastrophe because of the one-sided notion of "self-observation" that they had acquired from Orage.

The first five talks of the Third Series are then practical and "instructive" demonstrations of how Gurdjieff, upon arriving in America in 1930, successfully maneuvered not only to dislodge the loyalty of his followers away from Orage and back directly toward himself—and, not only to gather a substantial amount (\$113,000 in 1930s) of sums as "fines" imposed on the more or less reluctant students for the purpose of covering his own personal and also of Institute-founding expenses (in America)—but also demonstrated, according to Gurdjieff's intended account, his continuing masterly influence over Orage to the point of successfully demanding from Orage to sign an oath never to have any more contacts with Orage, that is, with Orage's own former self. The insertion of this story involving the practical demonstration of his influence over his followers was meant, at the same time, to reveal to his students themselves the degree to which their minds were enslaved to the "psychic factor" of human suggestibility:

I want to describe these events and the different consequences deriving from them which unexpectedly engendered even for myself very profitably arranged circumstances chiefly because, throwing a real, and not a puffing, light on it, as is the habit regarding everything American, one might give for the inner sight of every reader a very good picture for the understanding of how strongly is developed in these Americans, considered all over the Earth among contemporary people as the most cultured, the feeling which is called "herd instinct," which had become an infallible inherency of contemporary people in general, and is manifested in the fact that a man does not guide himself in his acts by his own reasoning but follows blindly the example of

others, and how the degree of development of his mentation—in the sense of his ableness to make logical confrontations—is really of a very low level ...

These events, ... by their content can correspond also to the aim which I put to myself in exposing this series—that is to say, that they might also carry an instructive character.... (L:118)

Book Eight?: “The Material Question”

The essay titled “The Material Question” is another practical and “instructive” demonstration of Gurdjieff’s influence over his students. The revised version of this story that was posthumously published as a separate chapter at the end of the Second Series can in fact be read at three levels of meaning. It is an interesting example of three stories, one told within the other, and all dealing with the material question.

These three levels of narration are as follows:

First story: During an April 8, 1924, evening gathering in honor of Gurdjieff who had just arrived in America for the first time, he is asked by one of those present, apparently a wealthy “practical” doctor, about the sources of funds for Gurdjieff’s “Institute.” Upon completion of Gurdjieff’s long response, which took almost the whole of the sleepless night until the following morning, the audience is so fascinated that from among them, one gentleman offers a check to Gurdjieff, promising to present the same to him every year until the end of his life, and another lady provides him “temporarily” with half of her rather large rainy-day savings fund, and Gurdjieff in turn gratefully promises to return the sum in eight years;

Second story: This is of course the long narrative of Gurdjieff’s response to the question asked, which takes up almost the whole of the text, involving the long and richly detailed reporting by Gurdjieff of his difficult struggles, all-round skills, and “astonishing” abilities to generate funds in the period in Russia preceding his arrival in Europe in 1912;

Third story: This is the later Gurdjieff, in April 1931, “exactly seven years to the very day” of the aforementioned gathering, revising the previous two stories, and reflecting in short passages at the end of the piece on what transpired after that meeting, including his *current* financial difficulties and need for financial support.

The translators of the Second Series call this text an “astonishing narrative” (M:xi). And it so appears to be. But it also seems to be carefully constructed to practically demonstrate the remarkable power and influence Gurdjieff exerted over people not simply in his spiritual but also in his “material” endeavors as conveyed also through his writings. Of course, for Gurdjieff, as he presents his stories, financial matters were only means for the attainment of his spiritual searches, but the degree of skill with which Gurdjieff constructs these stories within stories for the attainment of the

necessary funds for his life and teaching projects is of particular relevance to his "instructive" purposes in the Third Series.

Note how Gurdjieff presents in his text the reaction of the first contributor in his first story, the contributor acknowledging that his reaction to the (second) story may have been a result of his own "suggestibility;" note that these are words *Gurdjieff writes* on his behalf:

At this point in his narrative Mr. Gurdjieff paused, and, with his particular smile, began to smoke a cigarette. In the silence reigning in the room, Mr. H rose from his place, went over to Mr. Gurdjieff, and said:

'Mr. Gurdjieff, I really do not know, after all the joking remarks you have seen fit to make about the material question, whether it is due to the **particular order in which you have told your story today, or to my naivete or suggestibility**, but, beyond all doubt, at this moment I am ready with my whole being to do anything to lighten the enormous burden you have voluntarily taken upon yourself.

'And I shall perhaps be even nearer the truth if I tell you that this impulse has arisen in me owing to the distinct impression I received throughout your narrative: that in taking upon yourself this high task, a task beyond the limits of strength of an ordinary man, you have always up till now been absolutely alone.

'Allow me to put into your hands this cheque which represents all that I have at my disposal at this moment. At the same time, in the presence of all those here, I pledge myself to deliver the same sum to you every year for the rest of my life, wherever you may be and whatever may be your circumstances!'

When Mr. H had finished speaking and, visibly moved, was wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, Mr. Gurdjieff stood up and, placing a hand on his shoulder, looked at him with that penetrating, kind and grateful look of his, which I personally can never forget, and said simply:

'Thank you—my, from today, God-given brother.' (M:295–96)

The second story, Gurdjieff's long narrative of the Russian period prior to his arrival in Europe in 1912, provides detailed information regarding his view of the "material question" and its relationship to his spiritual quest. Of particular significance is his revelations in the course of his story (M:287) of the fact that he had taken an oath, back in 1907 (fifteen years before 1922), never to base the funding of his Institute on money borrowed from others, and, moreover, of the fact that he for the first time had to make an exception to this in 1922. In light of this revelation, the offering by Mr. H after his story and the acceptance by Gurdjieff, suggests that Gurdjieff had already adopted the policy of accepting what was offered to him freely for funding his Institute, and also that he accepted to borrow funds from others

(such as Lady L who also offered her “rather large sum”) from then on, though accepting the responsibility of returning the loans in the future.

The third story, that is the older Gurdjieff’s comments in 1931 on the double-narrative from 1924, is itself of interest. Here, Gurdjieff concludes the story in such a way that indicates to what extent he is in need of generating the necessary funds for repaying his “ever increasing debts” and in general for funding his Institute. Having set a deadline to accomplish all his financial goals, he suggests that if he fails to accomplish his aims, he would be “forced to recognize the illusory nature of all the ideas expounded in this narrative, as well as my own extravagant imagination” (M:303). Following this, in case of failure, he threatens to burn all his writings except the First Series and the first two chapters of his Second Series, and instead of continuing his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, he would found an institute for “instruction in hitherto undiscovered means of self-satisfaction” (M:303), adding ... “there is no doubt that a business like that would run as if on greased wheels” (M:303).

Gurdjieff, of course, is here speaking in an ironic tone, conveying the message that what he had intended to accomplish through his teaching and the Institute could not have been for the sake of acquiring his own livelihood and “self-satisfaction,” for, given his skills in entrepreneurship and business, he could have been a rich man if he had chosen a route in ordinary life other than his spiritual quests.

Through its three-tiered narrative, in other words, Gurdjieff has managed not only to skillfully demonstrate the significance of, and his practical abilities in, generating funds to finance his spiritual quests, not only to convey his principle of subordinating the material question to the interest of his teaching, but also to transmit an underlying theme of expectation on his part for more financial resources to cover his living and teaching expenses.

There is an important “material question” also present in *Herald*. The book was originally priced at a variable price ranging from 8 to 108 French francs, to be decided depending on the “free will” (H:8) of the purchaser, and was distributed with a numbered “Registration-Blank” requesting the reader to provide her/his name and address and price paid, and the references through whom the book was acquired. In other words, Gurdjieff apparently considered this first “appeal to contemporary humanity” as one of his funds-generating efforts as well. One of the running themes of the book, in fact, is a solicitation from Gurdjieff’s closest pupils, past and present, to provide him with the necessary funds to reopen the Institute in France. Given that the book was soon withdrawn, it obviously failed in fulfilling this “material” purpose for which it was launched.

But it would be wrong to judge the effects of *Herald* based solely on its immediate impact. Substantively speaking, one can argue that *Herald* has in

fact provided, over the long-term, one of the most, if not *the* most, significant practical demonstrations of Gurdjieff's influence over others. Through publishing *Herald* Gurdjieff practically demonstrated the extent to which others' loyalties to him transcended the conscious realm of purely mental and intellectual associations with him. Despite a document in which he explicitly confessed to have practically "used" others as objects of his "scientific" observations and experimentations, of having, albeit "automatically," exerted hypnotic influence over them and thereby helped crystallize "undesirable" psychic factors in them, Gurdjieff enjoyed a surge in his popularity in the final years of his life, and even ever since his death his influence has increased, even though many prefer to remain anonymous.

What is "astonishing" is the fact that despite the general accessibility of *Herald* to the public, and despite great efforts made on the part of his pupils to preserve his legacy, this booklet that contains some of the most significant clues to Gurdjieff's life and teaching as a whole is still dropped from the official compilations of the main list of his writings.¹⁴

Book Seven?: The Hypnotic Homage

To explain what is meant by the vibrations [of the Law of Seven] that I have just been speaking about, I can at once take as an excellent example the causes of the fact that today, enemies with an unusual inner attitude toward me are multiplying in great numbers, and I am now in relationship with them on all sides.

Among the diverse characteristic aspects of this unusual inner attitude on the part of the multitude of my enemies, we shall take for our explanation only the following:

There is not, so to speak, a single one of my sworn enemies who, in one or another of his ordinary states, would not be ready to "sell his soul for me."

"What an absurdity!" each of my readers will think. "How could one and the same man possibly have two such diametrically opposed attitudes toward another person?"

14. J. Walter Driscoll has noted to this author how *Herald* is treated by such publishers as Weiser and Holmes as public domain material and is the only canonical work that has never been published by Triangle Editions, Inc., or Janus, the copyright holders of Gurdjieff's other English language works. While seeking permissions to quote passages from Gurdjieff's writings, Triangle Editions, Inc., confirmed that *Herald* is in public domain. It is noteworthy to consider that Gurdjieff printed the following declaration on the open, inside, end of the front cover of the 1933 edition of *Herald*: "Contrary to the established custom, I shall not only permit this first book of mine, as well as the books of the first series, to be printed in any country, but, if necessary, I am willing to subsidize it, on the condition of course that absolute accuracy is preserved." The statement is also noteworthy in regard to the extent Gurdjieff considered the accuracy and public/private domain status of the then-planned first edition of the First Series to be paramount in conveying the nature of his teaching.

Yes, from a superficial point of view, it is absurd—and all the same, in reality, it is so.

Indeed, it is an irrefutable fact, a fact that can be demonstrated at will in all its details, not only on the practical level—I mean to say, by normal means available to everybody—but also scientifically, by making use of all the “diagnostics” of the various branches of the official science of our day, such as jurisprudence, chemistry, physics, medicine, etc. ... and, it seems, psychoanalysis itself.

Moreover, nothing is easier to demonstrate than this, in the first place because suitable subjects for study can be found free of charge by the thousands, and furthermore—and this is the most important—because such investigations have as their point of departure a principle I have already established and formulated in a manner fully acceptable for every category of learned being.

This principle, which is beyond scientific dispute, I have defined in the following terms:

“The sharpness of the contradiction which appears between two diametrically opposed actions is directly proportional to the duration of their meeting.”

And, in truth, it is so. The more someone has direct relations with me, the more strength he shows later in the diametrically opposed actions that he manifests towards me. (L:174–75)

The above passages from the (presently) last chapter of Gurdjieff’s Third Series summarize the reason for which it was written. However, it may more suitably be regarded as the first book of a Third Series that would include also “The Material Question,” the Orage crisis talks, and *Herald*. This chapter/book is more of a theoretical reflection that better flows as a transition from the Second Series, and can shed light on what then transpires in the existing and “missing” books of the Third Series where the purpose is to show how beyond the “illusive” master-pupil relationships can transpire a “real world” of “scientific” and “material” interests. Gurdjieff seeks in this chapter to provide in effect an explanation for the odd possibility that one can be hypnotized while denying that one is. Gurdjieff shows how an “enemy” at the same time may be ready to sell his soul for him. Here is the grand hypnotist’s most ingenious art at work: to make others dependent on himself and his teaching while making them believe that they are not, to the point of publicly leaving and even hating him. To portray Gurdjieff as a teacher who did not demand homage from his pupils, then, is to miss the forest for the trees.

The explanations provided in this chapter/book of the Third Series are aimed at explicating the complexity of the simultaneous threefold communication processes possible for “three-brained beings.” The

“vibrations” emanating from the three centers of one man, Gurdjieff tells us in this chapter/book titled “The Outer and Inner World of Man,” can have differential effects on the vibrations of another. So long as the three centers operate independently and separately from one another, so long as they do not consciously and intentionally blend into one another, instead of an “individual” we really have at least three persons in one body, as if three people were living in it. So long as these “totalities” have not been blended into a singular individuality, Gurdjieff teaches us by the use of the “ancient” text (L:144–147)—previously introduced in Chapter Three—with which he begins this chapter, so long as they remain separate and independently functioning “totalities,” the so-called individual does not actually exist. Therefore, it would be possible for someone skilled and experienced in hypnotism, as Gurdjieff was, to create vibrations that would at one and the same time attract and repel another “individual” to and from oneself. While administering “stepping on corns” on someone and thereby repelling him, for example, Gurdjieff could at that very same time generate feelings of attraction to and reverence for himself in that person. The most vivid example of how Gurdjieff could consciously and intentionally exert influence on his followers can perhaps be illustrated by the story of Ouspensky’s relations with him. While having repelled him for life, we find Ouspensky producing one of the most legitimizing accounts of Gurdjieff’s teaching for him.

The purpose of the Third Series is to awaken the reader from illusions and to the real world. The readers of the Third Series, however, were not strangers to Gurdjieff’s teaching, but the closest of his pupils. Was the “another purpose” to which Gurdjieff refers on his deathbed the intended effect, in his view, of helping his pupils awaken to illusions of master-pupil relationships, and begin to see the “real” material, organizational, and practical skills necessary to continue the master’s teaching?

In the Third Series Gurdjieff demonstrates how one can be subjected to hypnotic influence as a result of fragmentation of one’s centers into separate and independently operating instinctive, waking conscious, and subconscious awarenesses. Conversely, he teaches that “life is real only then, when” these independent centers of awareness, these three totalities separately coexisting in the human organism, could blend into one another as a result of conscious and intentional efforts by the same organism and make a unified “individual” a reality. It is only then that one can say, feel, and sense a singular and unified “I Am” in her/his being. The achievement of this state of awareness, however, would necessitate theoretical preparations and practical exercises that would make possible, if explained and conducted in a “complete” fashion, the safeguarding of one’s “inner world” from hypnotic influences coming from the “outer world.”

Yet, Gurdjieff *apparently* opts not to provide such a “complete” explanation of how this can be done in his Third Series. Not having extinguished his reader’s curiosity completely, he refers the reader back to the First Series. Leaving the Third Series “incomplete and unfinished,” however, does not really mean that he did not have more to write. In fact Gurdjieff reports that he had, thanks to his “stepping on corns” technique that exposed the inner life of his subjects to him, already amassed such wealth of “scientific” material about the human psyche that he could write for the rest of his life:

... even, it may be said boldly, I became “stuffed” again with such wealth of purely psychological material that, contrary to my conviction, as well as that of all those who have more or less familiarised themselves with my writings,—a conviction that I had nothing more to write about, as I had already written about everything imaginable, it would, perhaps, have sufficed for my new writer’s profession for the remainder of my life, assuming of course that I desired to continue it. (H:70)

Gurdjieff left the Third Series “incomplete,” not because he intended to reveal less of his subject, but because “all and everything” of what he had intended to say had already been written and contained, albeit in a “fragmented” and cryptic form, in the stories within stories of the First Series. In this way, as he pens *Herald* as perhaps the (allegedly “destroyed”) “summarizing-concluding” book of his Third Series and the “tenth part” of all series of his writings as a whole, he brings us back again to the big Do of the grand musical octave of his writings, *Beelzebub’s Tales to his Grandson*, to begin digging more and more for his “dog.”

In his Third Series Gurdjieff reveals his identity as a remarkable hypnotist who used others as objects of his scientific experimentations to perfect his own art for “future generations.” But here he stops short of explicitly admitting that he actually used hypnotism on his subjects in any conscious and intentional way, and if he did, it was done for the purpose of advancing his scientific interests. At most, Gurdjieff tells us, such hypnotic influences on his part came about “automatically,” to nullify which he practiced his “stepping on corns” technique. His “twenty one year of artificial life” story, in other words, was intended to quench the curiosities (and doubts) of the reader by suggesting that even if such “undesirable” hypnotic side-effects took place in the past in an unintended manner, in the future they would not continue *as before*.

Did Gurdjieff actually abandon practicing his knowledge and experience in hypnotism in the new phase of his teaching marked by his efforts to now “give himself out” as an “author”? In order to answer this question about what followed Gurdjieff’s twenty-one-year “artificial life,” we need to step back and examine his account of what preceded that period.

Chapter Seven **MEETINGS WITH THE REMARKABLE HYPNOTIST**

SECOND SERIES: To acquaint the reader with the material required for a new creation and to prove the soundness and good quality of it.
—B:v

From my point of view, he can be called a remarkable man who stands out from those around him by the resourcefulness of his mind, and who knows how to be restrained in the manifestations which proceed from his nature, at the same time conducting himself justly and tolerably towards the weaknesses of others.
—M:31

Why the Second Series?

What did Gurdjieff *actually* mean by the above statement of purpose of his Second Series, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*?

In order to appreciate the significance of the question just raised, let us read again Gurdjieff's purpose statements for the other two series that "logically"¹ precede or follow the Second Series.

1. "All written according to entirely new principles of logical reasoning and strictly directed towards the solution of the following three cardinal problems ..." (B:v)

FIRST SERIES: To destroy, mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world.

THIRD SERIES: To assist the arising, in the mentation and in the feelings of the reader, of a veritable, nonfantastic representation not of that illusory world which he now perceives, but of the world existing in reality. (B:v)

In the First Series, in other words, Gurdjieff seeks to destroy in the “mentation and feelings” of the reader, “mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever,” all the centuries-old views and beliefs about the real world—views and beliefs that are non-veritable and fantastic. Gurdjieff then seeks in the Third Series to assist the arising in the reader’s mind and feelings, instead, of a “veritable, nonfantastic representation” of the real world. In the above two statements, therefore, Gurdjieff has in view a relationship between himself and “the reader” set in the context of a “real world” that has been previously perceived by the reader only in an illusory way. His overall purpose is to help the reader destroy her/his old views and beliefs and instead develop, in both mind and feelings, a veritable and nonfantastic representation of the world as it *really* exists.

The Second Series, however, comes just in between accomplishing these two tasks. The question is: why not proceed directly from the first to the Third Series? What purpose does the Second Series serve in this particular ordering of Gurdjieff’s writings? Why does Gurdjieff insist on this particular order of reading his series?

In order to begin exploring the above questions, we need to consider a puzzling aspect of the above three statements of purpose as a whole. If Gurdjieff is successful in accomplishing what he promises to do in the particular order of his three series, we must assume that the task of “merciless” destruction of the old views and beliefs has already been accomplished in the First Series (especially given that it has been read at least thrice, as Gurdjieff advises his readers to do so in his “Friendly Advice” (B:vi)). Given that the Second Series seeks, according to Gurdjieff’s second statement, to inculcate only material of “sound” and “good quality” in the reader, then why does he again, in his statement for the Third Series, insert the phrase “not the illusory world which he now perceives” (B:v)? Where did this “illusory world” perception *again* come from? Why did it emerge again in the course of moving along from the First to the Third Series? Did it emerge in the course of the Second (or even the First) Series?

Is the *real* purpose of the First and the Second Series, in other words, to “crystallize” (albeit temporarily) non-veritable and fantastic illusions of a *new* kind about the world that serve a certain purpose in Gurdjieff’s teaching? Is the “material required for a new creation” which Gurdjieff promises to inculcate in the reader in the Second Series in fact a new

“illusory world” perception, but this time made of material of “sound” and “good” quality? Is it this new “illusory world” perception, temporarily needed for Gurdjieff’s teaching purposes, that later becomes itself the target of the Third Series to “decrystallize” and overcome? Is Gurdjieff’s insistence on the particular order of reading his three series as a whole due to the fact that to attain his overall purpose of teaching he must first destroy his reader’s existing illusory world-perception of (to his judgment) an unsound and bad quality (in the First Series), then crystallize a new illusory world-perception of a sound and good quality (in the Second Series), to be followed by the shattering of even this new illusory world-perception in the interest of a realistic and impartial world-view?

There is a passage in *Herald* which particularly lends plausibility to the existence of such a “crystallization and decrystallization” intention in Gurdjieff’s teaching and writing. At the end of the “Circular Letter” attached to the end of *Herald*, when Gurdjieff is pleading for support from his pupils holding “bitter-dregs” against him for his having confessed to have used them as “objects of observations and investigation,” he writes:

As I was obliged to address this first circular letter principally to people who have already come into direct relation to me, I should like to profit by this opportunity and to express in conclusion in the name of future generations as well as personally my sincere gratitude to those of the people coming into contact with me during the twenty-year-period of life mentioned in the “Herald-Of-Coming-Good”, **who have through many years—without their knowledge—served me as objects of my observations and investigations of the processes going on in them of crystallisation and decrystallisation of those psychic factors, the transformation of which for the acquiring of subjectivised manifestation demands a comparatively lengthy period.**

I consider it my moral duty to add here that these observations and investigations of mine in the past cannot henceforth serve as the reason why these people, who have served as the objects of my investigation, should now have lost the possibility of entering together with others upon the true path and of attaining—by the help of my detailed and written explanations—to real Being. (H:81–82; emphasis in bold added)

In the above passage, Gurdjieff explicitly acknowledges how for the purpose of his “observations and investigations” it was necessary to subject his pupils, *without their knowledge*, to a long-term process of crystallisation and decrystallization of certain “psychic factors.” His intention is to suggest to these, his closest pupils, that despite such a twofold process of instilling and then removing “psychic factors,” the end result must be their recognizing that this was for their own good, and that they should now, using their teacher’s “detailed and written explanations,” embark on the path of helping him spread his writings and reestablish his Institute and teaching.

The significant question that arises from the above observation is whether what Gurdjieff admits to have done during his twenty-one-year “artificial life” can be somehow replicable by him in the texture of his writings as an “objective” form of art for future generations. In other words, are the three series of his writings, considered as a whole, a general process of “crystallisation and decrystallisation” of certain “psychic factors” necessary for the establishment and spread of Gurdjieff’s teaching?

In the exploration (in the previous chapter) of Gurdjieff’s Third Series, I have touched upon ways in which Gurdjieff in fact sought to “decrystallize” certain views of himself held by his pupils, through providing them with certain *real* and not just illusory pieces of information about his own life and teaching. The experience of publishing *Herald* indicated the extent to which acceptance of such “realities” about the master’s life and teaching was difficult for his pupils. Even to this day, the small booklet containing the most revealing aspects of Gurdjieff’s teaching and life, a source that indeed provides the key to unlocking the secret and “enigma” of Gurdjieff’s life and works, is missing from the official bibliographies of key sources by and about Gurdjieff found on his pupil’s official websites.²

My purpose at this particular stage of this exploration is to study how the “crystallisation” of these “psychic factors” was accomplished by Gurdjieff in his Second (and as we shall later explore, First) Series.

Crystallizations of a Sound and Good Illusory World

In what follows, I will try to demonstrate that the central purpose of the Second Series is indeed the crystallization in the reader of a deeply ingrained sense of attachment, in both mind and feeling, to Gurdjieff as a teacher. The “material required for a new creation,” in other words, is a deeply hypnotic sense of identification with Gurdjieff himself and the particular way in which his life is portrayed in the Second Series. In *Meetings* Gurdjieff intends to demonstrate the “soundness” and “good quality” of such an hypnotic dependence upon himself by his “reader” as a requirement for the furtherance of his life’s mission and teaching as a whole.

Let us explore the ways in which such an hypnotic attachment by the pupil on Gurdjieff’s life is “crystallized” in the Second Series.

In the purpose statement proposed by Gurdjieff for the Second Series, everything revolves around the phrase “material required for a new creation.” Obviously, the acquaintance of the reader with certain material exposed in the Second Series is a *precondition* that is necessary for the

2. The website of the Gurdjieff Foundation in the U.S. (<http://www.gurdjieff.org/foundation.htm>; see) does not list *The Herald of Coming Good* as one of the “key books by or about Gurdjieff” (see <http://www.gurdjieff.org/bibliography2.htm>); the book is also missing from the “Bibliography” found on the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York website (<http://www.gurdjieff-foundation-newyork.org/work2.html>).

successful and effective accomplishment of the purpose of the Third Series, which has more of a practical character and purpose: further aiding the *already assimilated* pupils in the organizational life of Gurdjieff's teaching. In order to join a Gurdjieffian organization, after all, one must become interested in Gurdjieff himself. The inculcation of this particular precondition was not a purpose of the First Series. The First Series primarily dealt with Gurdjieff's *teaching*. The Second Series, however, deals with Gurdjieff's own *life*. It is the inculcation of *this new material* about Gurdjieff's life and personality as a real person—and not just a mythological figure clothed in the symbolic persona of Beelzebub or of the prophet Ashiata Shiemash—that is the central purpose of the Second Series. If the three series were originally read backwards, the reader would be ill-prepared for being exposed to certain data and information about Gurdjieff and his teaching as presented in a particular order in the three series.

What is, then, the exact nature of the “material required for a new creation” which Gurdjieff considers to be the central purpose of his Second Series to acquaint his readers with? How does Gurdjieff achieve the crystallization of “psychic factors” of “sound and good quality” in the thoughts and feelings of the readers of the Second Series?

What Does Being “Remarkable” Signify?

From the title of the Second Series, and Gurdjieff's introduction to the book, it seems that on the surface this “material” is associated, on the one hand, with a certain human quality of being “remarkable,” and on the other, with the condition of meeting and coming under the influence of such remarkable people. In Gurdjieff's view, in other words, in order to create a new realistic representation of the real world (or, to read this subtextually, to be able to initiate and establish a new religious/spiritual movement), what is needed as a precondition is the sound and good quality of meeting and coming under the influence of “remarkable” human beings, and becoming “remarkable” oneself. And it is the “sound” and “good” nature of this human quality of meeting and becoming “remarkable” men (and women) as a precondition for a “new creation” that Gurdjieff seeks to prove by narrating his own and other biographical stories in the book.

On the surface, of course, *Meetings* appears to be an autobiography of Gurdjieff himself in relation to the biographies of personalities he met in his life, told in ten fragments (if we consider the Introduction itself as one of the fragments), the seventh of which (on Prince Yuri Lubovedsky) is comprised itself of three fragments. Each story fragment is devoted to the introduction of one or more “remarkable” men (in one case, a woman, and in another case, a “remarkable” dog) Gurdjieff met during his early life. These “remarkable” beings whose life and impact on his own life Gurdjieff narrates in the Second Series include (in the order of their appearance in the

book): 1. Introduction: an “intelligent, elderly Persian”; 2-his father; 3-his first tutor (Dean Borsh); 4-Priest Bogachevsky; 5-Mr. X or Captain Pogossian; 6-Abram Yelov; 7-Prince Yuri Lubovedsky (including also the stories of Vitvitskaya, Soloviev, and Philos the dog); 8-Ekim Bey; 9-Piotr Karpenko; and 10-Professor Skridlov. Of these, chapters 2–4, 5–7, and 8–10, seem to represent respectively books one, two, and three of the Second Series according to Gurdjieff’s original classification (B:v).

What does Gurdjieff mean by the human quality of being “remarkable”? For Gurdjieff, one can be called remarkable if one “stands out from those around him by the resourcefulness of his mind, and who knows how to be restrained in the manifestations that proceed from his nature, at the same time conducting himself justly and tolerably toward the weaknesses of others” (M:31). Those portrayed by Gurdjieff, including himself, in *Meetings* presumably exemplify what Gurdjieff means by this definition of remarkableness. His intention in the book is to introduce in a living form, through the example of both others and of himself, the “soundness” and “good quality” of what he means by being “remarkable.”

Let us analyze the definition offered by Gurdjieff about the sound and good human quality of being “remarkable.” There are three qualities to being “remarkable,” if we follow Gurdjieff’s expressed definition:

- 1-Knowledge: In resourcefulness of mind s/he is distinguishable from others;
- 2-Relation of knowledge to being: s/he knows how to be restrained in the manifestations that proceed from her/his nature;
- 3-Is just and tolerable toward the weaknesses of others.

Gurdjieff further elaborates on his definition of being “remarkable” by introducing the first of the “seven ancient sayings”³ he promises his readers to embed in the text of his Second Series. The first one is as follows:

Only he will deserve the name of man and can count upon anything prepared for him from Above, who has already acquired corresponding data for being able to preserve intact both the wolf and the sheep confided to his care. (M:4)

3. Regarding the “seven ancient sayings” Gurdjieff writes: “In this Second Series I intend, among other things, to introduce and elucidate seven sayings which have come down to our day from very ancient times by means of inscriptions on various monuments, which I happened to come across and deciphered during my travels—sayings in which our remote ancestors formulated certain aspects of objective truth, clearly perceptible even to contemporary human reason. . . .” (M:3). A careful analysis of Gurdjieff’s text in the Second Series does not yield a satisfactory conclusion as to what the rest of these promised sayings are. The most likely candidates, beyond the first obvious one quoted above, are perhaps those appearing on pages 7, 48, 77, 185, 210, and 240, where the passages follow the explicit mention of the word “saying” and are associated with older religious “objective” beliefs in contrast to other sayings Gurdjieff cites in his text as being merely “subjective sayings” (such as those of his father).

Gurdjieff follows this first “ancient saying” by narrating an “Asiatic” parable using which one can begin to see how the task of such a conscious balancing act between the wolf and the sheep can be accomplished:

The question posed by this tricky problem is to find out how a man who has in his possession a wolf, a goat and, in the present case, a cabbage, can transfer them across a river from one bank to the other, if one takes into consideration, on the one hand, that his boat can carry only the load of himself and one of the three objects at a time, and on the other hand, that without his direct observation and influence the wolf can always destroy the goat, and the goat the cabbage. (M:4)

The solution to this puzzle, Gurdjieff reminds his reader, will reveal that the man in question must possess a resourceful mind (conscious labor) and be willing to take extra trips back and forth (intentional suffering, not being lazy) as a means for balancing his inner forces.

From Gurdjieff’s elaborations in the above two passages (M:4), it becomes clear that for him the wolf symbolizes the (automatically functioning) body, the goat (or sheep) symbolizes feelings, the cabbage symbolizes the mind, and the man symbolizes the master self or the real “I”—this classification pertaining especially to the more expanded conception expressed in the “tricky problem” above. Being “remarkable” involves, other than the condition of being just and tolerable to others who lack such balancing skills, the condition of being resourceful enough to be able—through “conscious labors and voluntary sufferings” (M:4)—to harmoniously develop and balance the three sides of one’s inner self. If one is able to do so, and in the meantime remain tolerable and just to the weaknesses (in terms of absence of such a development and balance of inner selves) in others, then he or she would be not only “remarkable,” but even become “worthy to possess that which, as affirmed in this saying, is prepared from Above and is, in general, foreordained for man” (M:4).

I will show later in this chapter that the ability to consciously and intentionally balance one’s inner selves involves, at different degrees of its development, certain knowledge and ability of what Gurdjieff calls “the ancient science of hypnotism.” In other words, willful, i.e., conscious and intentional, exchange and balancing of the manifestations of one’s instinctive, conscious, and subconscious minds and energies requires certain degrees of knowledge and ability to hypnotize oneself.

Gurdjieff uses the term “remarkable” for people possessing such an ability—whether instinctively present (such as in his father) or professionally steered (such as in the hypnotist/magician Ekim Bey, the mountain fakir exerting influence on animals, or Gurdjieff himself in the guise of the “elderly, intelligent Persian”)—in order to highlight what he regards as being indispensable “material required” for the creation of a new

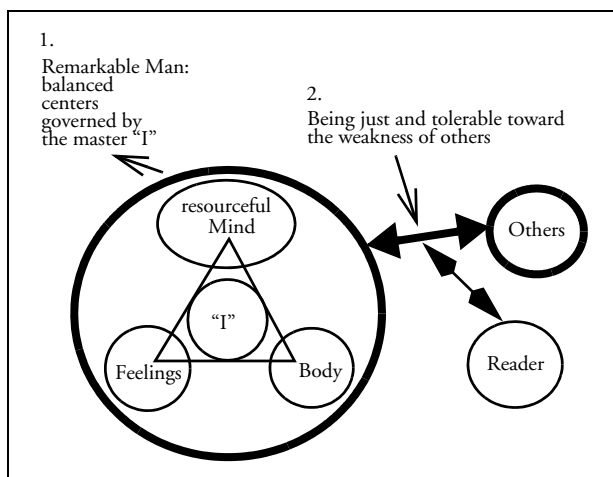


Figure 7.1 Gurdjieff's Definition of Remarkableness and Its Aspects

spiritual movement. What Gurdjieff includes in the definition of such remarkableness, of course, involves also the condition of not misusing such an ability toward others who do not possess it—in other words, displaying “just and tolerable” attitudes toward those who come under the hypnotic influence that “proceed from [one’s] nature.”

Figure 7.1 illustrates the definitional attributes of a “remarkable” person as conceptualized by Gurdjieff in his introduction. In principle there are two attributes: one pertaining to the inner life (governed by a real “I” possessing a resourceful mind, and able to balance it with the other two physical and emotional centers), and the other pertaining to the outer life (relations to others who do not possess such inner attributes).

The narrative of *Meetings* involves an artful construction by Gurdjieff, based on the above skeletal definition of “remarkableness,” of the manifold ways in which Gurdjieff’s own remarkable qualities as a hypnotist were shaped under the influence of meetings with “remarkable” people who had achieved at the given time in Gurdjieff’s life various levels of remarkableness and inner balance in their own lives. At the same time, it can also be demonstrated that the reconstruction of this autobiographical data from numerous fragments in the Second Series can help reproduce the same experience and “material” of remarkableness in the being of fertile readers.

Back to “Inexactitudes” and the Enneagram

In order to better observe the link between Gurdjieff’s definition of remarkableness and that of his narrative, it is once again necessary to remind ourselves of Gurdjieff’s idea of “inexactitudes” in “objective art.”

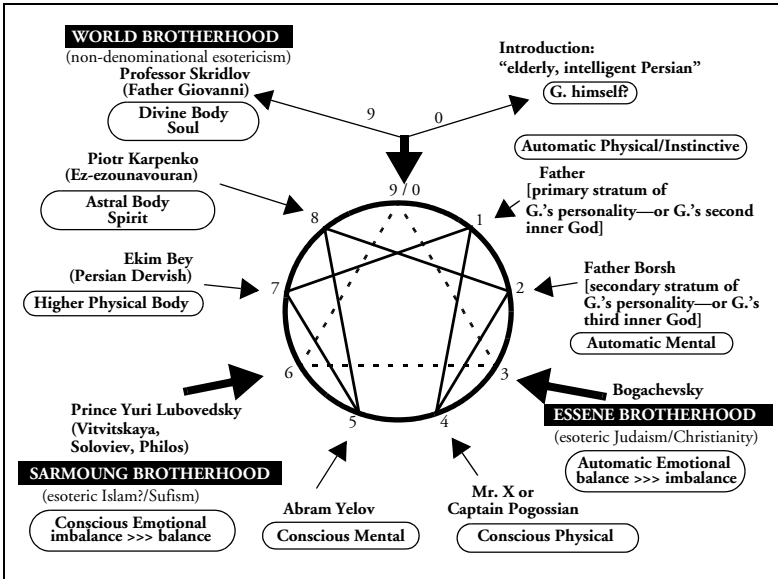


Figure 7.2 The Developmental Enneagram of Gurdjieff's Life as Influenced through Meetings with Remarkable Men as Presented in the Second Series

Following his notion of “sevenfold inexactitudes” as containing indications of intentional messages embedded in “objective art,” we notice the difference of the seventh (numbered) chapter in *Meetings* as being not “exactly” like others. This is the only chapter that is itself explicitly fragmented into sections bearing the titles of “three” other personages (Vitvitskaya and Soloviev, and less directly Philos the dog). This indicates that Gurdjieff intentionally sought to keep the number of chapters in *Meetings* to ten, beginning with the introduction which is numbered as the first. The introduction is not set aside from the numbering scheme. Knowing what significance numbers 3 and 7 have in his cosmology, and having become already acquainted with his enneagram, it is possible to arrange the chapters of *Meetings* along the numbers of the enneagram, beginning with 0 and ending with 9, not excluding the shock points at 0, 3, and 6 for the distribution of chapters. This is illustrated in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2 shows that the “entirely new principles of logical reasoning” underlying the Second Series (and the entire three series, as I will show later) is indeed the enneagram. Following the point 0, where he quotes himself through the voice of an “elderly Persian,” Gurdjieff constructs a narrative that deals with how his inner life and “centers” developed under the influence of various “remarkable” people he met during his life.

In considering the enneagramatic logic of the Second Series, it is also important to note the ways in which the ten-part unfolding of Gurdjieff's meetings correspond to the "three books" classification of the Second Series as originally envisaged by Gurdjieff (B:v). The first three personages (father, Dean Borsh, and Bogachevsky) in the first book represent the *automatic* influences Gurdjieff received in the physical-instinctive (including sexual), mental, and emotional realms of his inner life. It is the priest Bogachevsky who becomes the vehicle for exertion of the next major shock at point 3 to the seemingly stable system of instinctive or acquired mental beliefs previously inculcated in Gurdjieff by his father and Father Borsh. Bogachevsky initiates a deep-seated conflict between Gurdjieff's religious and "scientific" belief systems. He disturbs and unsettles Gurdjieff's automatically inculcated balance developed during his childhood.

The following three personages (Pogossian, Yelov, and the Prince) in the second book highlight Gurdjieff's becoming aware of the value and significance of *conscious* physical, mental, and emotional work in order to balance the functioning of his inner centers. It is Prince Lubovedsky and Gurdjieff's experience of meeting him that is a decisive shock on the young Gurdjieff's whole presence, bringing his previously unbalanced state into a new state of conscious balance. Gurdjieff's introduction of the personages Vitvitskaya, Soloviev, and Philos at this point are meant to further elaborate on how consciously balanced development of three centers can help overcome previous habituations embedded in the emotional center.

The last three personages in the last book (Ekim Bey, Karpenko, and Skridlov), and the three elders introduced amid their narratives respectively, demonstrate the further developmental processes Gurdjieff's inner centers underwent in the course of the "intentional sufferings" of his further travels. The Persian dervish (M:183–91) upsets all of Gurdjieff's previous beliefs about food, air, and his physical-instinctive functioning, initiating in him new knowledges and skills in the conduct of his higher physical functioning. The mountain elder (M:219–23) initiates Gurdjieff to the extraordinary abilities latent in the "astral body" or higher emotional center, and Father Giovanni (M:237–44) initiates Gurdjieff (and his friend, Skridlov) about the "Divine Body" or the higher intellectual center they had never previously experienced. The three books of the Second Series, in other words, delineate the three automatic, conscious, and intentional cycles of influences Gurdjieff received from various remarkable men in his life contributing to his own remarkable qualities.

The introduction of the three major "brotherhoods" at the three shock points of the overall scheme (the Essene Brotherhood at point 3, the Sarmoung Brotherhood at point 6, and the World Brotherhood at point 9/0) indicates not only the significance of these major "external" influences and shocks on Gurdjieff's life, but also the degree of significance each

school had on his development on an ascending valuation scale. The personages of the elders introduced in the last three chapters represent the physical, emotional, and mental “ways” through critical synthesis and transcendence of which Gurdjieff built his own “fourth way” school.

The “Readers”

Before elaborating on the *explicit* auto/biographical aspects of the narrative that indeed provide key information about the making of a remarkable and extraordinary hypnotist that was Gurdjieff, it is important not to lose sight of the *hidden and implicit* agenda Gurdjieff skillfully weaves into the fabric of the Second Series. As it will be shown later, the explicit and the implicit “material” introduced in the Second Series, targeting the “mentation” and “feelings” of the reader respectively, are both of crucial value for Gurdjieff in achieving his intended purpose in the Second Series.

From the reader’s point of view, of course, the relationships narrated involve only the set between Gurdjieff and the remarkable people he met. But it is important to notice that from Gurdjieff’s point of view, there are actually two sets of relationships involved: 1-between himself and his personages in the book; and 2-between the reader and his narrative itself (see Figure 7.1). In other words, as Gurdjieff takes the reader in the journeys of his meetings with the remarkable men of his life, discussing at each step how this or that remarkable being influenced the automatic, conscious, or intentional functioning of this or that center of his own psyche, at each step he is also establishing contact with the various levels and centers of functioning of his reader’s awareness: instinctive, conscious, and subconscious.

But why does Gurdjieff do this?

In order to understand what Gurdjieff does at each step in constructing his narrative, it is necessary to step back and consider another purpose for writing the Second Series to which Gurdjieff passingly refers toward the end of his introduction to the book. There, in a seemingly casual way, Gurdjieff suggests a rather practical purpose for his writing the Second Series:

That is why, in revising the material destined for this series, I have decided to present it in the form of separate independent tales, and to insert in them various ideas which can serve as answers to all the questions often put to me, so that if I should again have to deal with these shameless idlers, I may simply refer them to this or that chapter, whereby they can satisfy their automatic curiosity.... (M:29)

... Of the questions often put to me by people of various classes and different degrees of ‘informedness’, the following, as I recall, recurred most frequently:

What remarkable men have I met?

What marvels have I seen in the East?

Has man a soul and is it immortal?

Is the will of man free?

What is life, and why does suffering exist?

Do I believe in the occult and spiritualistic sciences?

What are hypnotism, magnetism, and telepathy?

How did I become interested in these questions?

What led me to my system, practised in the Institute bearing my name?
(M:30).

From the above, of course, one expects that Gurdjieff would present in his Second Series as much information about his own life as is necessary to quench the thirsts of “automatic curiosity” on the part of his “shameless idler” readers. At least, one would expect that his text would aim at reducing such “automatic curiosities.”

However, as the narrative progresses, it becomes obvious to the careful reader that Gurdjieff not only does not intend to present, in a straightforward way, some basic information about his own life (beginning of course with a deliberate effort to avoid providing information about the actual date and place of his birth), but, on the contrary, he shrouds his life’s events in even more mystery than previously supposed by the reader. In other words, in the Second Series, Gurdjieff not only does not quench the thirst of curiosity on the part of the reader about his life and how under the influence of other remarkable men he himself became remarkable, but in fact *fuels* such curiosity with all kinds of non-verifiable and fantastic tales woven into the fabric of his autobiography. Gurdjieff’s narrative seems to be aimed at generating even more and *new* curiosities in the reader than satisfying the existing ones. And Gurdjieff does this in every single “fragment” chapter of his Second Series. *Meetings* appears to be a whole curiosity-generating enterprise, in other words, in every reading producing more and more “worms of curiosity” in the readers’ subconscious feelings to search for the questions, puzzles, and wonders woven into the fabric of the story of Gurdjieff’s life. At the end, the reader is left completely mesmerized about who this strange person, Gurdjieff, really was.

Fueling Ever More Curiosities

Before explaining why Gurdjieff is so persistently after causing ever more and newer curiosities, and what connection this has to his strategy of literary hypnotism and subliminal conditioning of his readers’ minds, let us enumerate the various ways in which Gurdjieff arouses, rather than satisfies, the reader’s curiosity in *Meetings* about his life:

1-*Fragmented information*: Information about his life and personages is fragmented into such scattered details that generates considerable curiosity, and requires much attention to piece together the story of his life and the various origins of his teaching. Gurdjieff certainly does not intend to make it easy for his reader to acquire a straightforward knowledge about his life.

2-*Withheld information*: Some rather basic information about Gurdjieff's life, including his date and exact place of birth, are withheld. Dates, which are provided for only a few events, intended as sign-posts to reconstruct his autobiography, are withheld for most others. Instead, dates of events are provided in reference to other events, as having happened years before or after other events. Reconstructing Gurdjieff's biography as a whole then requires the reader to *repeatedly* ponder and internalize the most detailed aspects of his life. Gurdjieff thereby makes himself known to the reader in most detail, and implants his story of life in the remotest corners of the reader's psyche.

3-*"Astonishing" information*: The fragments of information presented have such extraordinary nature and quality, often improbable, that generate great curiosity in the reader to want to know more about Gurdjieff's life and adventures. References to people who were "two hundred and seventy-five years old" (M:161), and to schools several thousand years old, having special secret traditions, ideas, and apparatuses, etc., are bound to create deep senses of wonder in the reader. The use of words and terms that would arouse curiosity in the reader is also part of his efforts to engender impulses of astonishment and curiosity in the reader. Use of names such as "Mr. X," withheld names of people, villages, and towns to preserve "secrecy," etc., are also among textual devices used by Gurdjieff to engender curiosity in his readers. The so-called "ancient map of pre-sand Egypt" Gurdjieff found in his early travels is, of course, one of the major climaxes of his narrative. It is portrayed in such mysterious conditions, and of having such mysterious contents, that the reader is left bewildered as to what really was in that map.

4-*Unfulfilled information*: In many chapters, when Gurdjieff comes to the point of presenting some key information he has long promised his readers, he fails to do so—instead he postpones the delivery of such information to a later date in his writings and life, which often never comes. This is particularly relevant regarding Gurdjieff's never-fulfilled promise in *Meetings* (M:191, 223, 243) to include three chapters in his Third Series on the (higher) physical, astral, and divine bodies of man. Also of significance is Gurdjieff's promise to "perhaps recount details" in a special book about his legendary "Sarmoung Brotherhood" (M:161).

5-*Lost information*: Having generated great curiosity about certain subjects in the reader, he indicates that further information has been unfortunately lost, or is lost but may perhaps be retrievable. This is particularly the case about further information about his father's recitations

and recordings. The personage Professor Skridlov literally “disappears” into the scene of turmoil in revolutionary Russia.

6-Conflicting information: In Gurdjieff’s last meeting in 1895 with Prince Lubovedsky at the Sarmoung Brotherhood, the Prince says he has been told by his elders that he would perhaps die in a matter of three years, but with some calculation on the part of the reader it becomes evident that Gurdjieff’s forty-year friendship and correspondence with the Prince, which began in 1890, must have continued until 1930–35, when the Prince must have lived at least thirty five years beyond his last meeting with Gurdjieff.

7-Subliminal information: By this I mean the transfer of Gurdjieff’s own sense of wonder and deep curiosity to the reader through repetition and emphases on such experiences using highly figurative words and language. A particular case in point is the use of the expression “worm of curiosity” that, together with the word “curiosity” alone, is often repeated in the text (M:70, 72, 100, ...). Throughout the text, Gurdjieff makes available ample emotionally charged phrases and expressions to indicate to the reader how deep-seated curiosity was (for him) and could be (for the reader) an essential “material” for spiritual development. What he does not directly tell his reader is that the book’s purpose is as much to create curiosity about spiritual awakening as it is to create curiosities about Gurdjieff himself. The latter, transmitted as his own deeply “obsessive” search for truth, is the continuing subtextual theme of the entire Second Series. The organizational construct “Seekers after Truth,” real or fable, is also a continuing reminder to the reader of the value of a life dedicated to quenching deep-seated curiosities about spiritual matters and, indeed, about Gurdjieff himself.

*8-Deliberately Vague Terms:*⁴ In addition to its standard usage as a pronoun, Gurdjieff frequently employs the word “something” or “substance” to characterize things that cannot be spoken, and about the mysterious nature of which the reader has to continually guess and wonder. In *Meetings*, for instance, Gurdjieff tells of how his father believed that as a result of “certain experiencings” a “certain substance” can be formed in the human organism that does not die at the same time the organism disintegrates, but “much later” (M:43); the narrative, interestingly, is followed by Gurdjieff’s father’s reminding his son about a “half-witted Armenian woman” whom Gurdjieff had hypnotized in front of his father a while earlier. Speaking of “half-witted” language, when on the surface one

4. I appreciate J. Walter Driscoll for bringing to my attention this additional attribute of Gurdjieff’s curiosity-generating writing. I have tried to amplify on the example he suggested for this attribute. In regard to the relation of vagueness to “alluring” teachings, Gurdjieff reportedly says in *Views in the Real World* (1984:51): “All these systems, based on a variety of theories, are extraordinarily alluring, no doubt because of their vagueness. They have a particular attraction for the half-educated, those who are half-instructed in positivist knowledge.”

wonders about that “certain something” that survives death “beyond all doubt,” one may be amused to discover with some afterthought that the “sperm” and “egg” would obviously be plausible substitutes for the “astonishing” facts “vaguely” transmitted from father to son. Obviously, his father must have been educating his son about sexuality, which literally involves “certain experiencings” that lead to the formation of “something or other” that can “transmigrate” from and survive the body of the organism even beyond its death, dying much later.

What makes the Second Series a curiosity-generating enterprise is that in matters of form and content it purports to be an actual auto/biography of real people set in actual historical conditions. Whether most elements of the story are artful constructions, or are actual reports of a life really lived, is not the point here. If it was, Gurdjieff certainly finds skillful ways to use his own biography to achieve the purpose of his Second Series. And there is no need or reason to question the possibility of Gurdjieff’s having lived a wondrous life. He did so, it seems. The (real or constructed) facticity of the Second Series, however, is in sharp contrast to the First Series which is constructed without any pretence for facticity as far as the general symbolic theme of the narrative is concerned. The weaving of real facts with non-verifiable, fantastic, events and tales in the Second Series generates considerable curiosity in the reader to “seek the truth” about Gurdjieff’s life and teaching.

It is no wonder that most reviews of the book (and in fact the feature film later produced as an adaptation from the Second Series) point to “the search” as being the central and key message of the book/film, indicating to the reader that what is important are not facts, but the “search” itself.

Matters of Content and Form

Interestingly, the intention of planting subliminal messages in the hidden texture of his writings is not something Gurdjieff hides from his readers. He tells his reader in the introduction, for instance, that he intends, through passages of a talk given by a certain “intelligent, elderly Persian,” to convey to his readers “all the other thoughts, so to say, artfully embedded in this passage, thoughts that, for anyone able to decipher them, can be exceedingly valuable material for a correct understanding of what I intend to elucidate in the last two series in a form accessible to any man seeking the truth” (M:6). After all, Gurdjieff seems to be proud of his having become “adroit in the art of concealing serious thoughts in an enticing, easily grasped outer form”—thoughts that would be “discernible only with the lapse of time” (M:7). But this frankness should not hide from the careful reader the fact that beyond the surface auto/biographical “material” of the narrative designated for *Meetings*, there is another “material” in the Second Series that Gurdjieff seeks to inculcate in his reader. If the surface story targets the “mentation” of the reader, the hidden story targets his feelings at

a deeply subconscious level. Implanting curiosity about Gurdjieff's own life is a central aspect of the latter "material" contained in the Second Series.

It appears, therefore, that Gurdjieff pursues a twofold strategy in the Second Series in order to meet his expressed purpose of making the reader "acquainted" with certain new "material." On the surface, and to influence the reader's "mentation," he narrates the story of his own life in relation to those of others in order to demonstrate by example—and thus "prove"—the soundness and good quality of being "remarkable." At a deeper level, targeting the feelings of his reader, however, he seeks to generate deep curiosities about his life and teaching in the reader through an often indistinguishable blend of partly factual and partly non-verifiable and fantastic information about his life. The results are lasting attachments to his personality in the guise of deep-seated curiosities about the nature and origins of his life and his "ancient" teaching. The "material required for a new creation" which Gurdjieff finds necessary to inculcate in his reader targets—consistent with his other two series—the "mentation" and feelings of his reader at the same time. He thereby influences not just the conscious, but also the subconscious realms of his reader's psyche.

These conscious and subconscious "material" artfully embedded in *Meetings* are presented in three forms: 1-commonsense (various sayings or idioms), 2-figurative (events, accidents), and 3-theoretical/logical (explicit definitions or uses of abstract concepts). The auto/biographical reading of the Second Series seems to be a surface feature of the book, presented in "a form understandable to everyone" (M:1), within whose fabric Gurdjieff's "sayings" on the one hand, and his concepts and ideas, on the other, are interwoven. Through reading the Second Series at these three levels of complexity, the "brave reader" seemingly acquaints her/himself with the material that is required for being able to represent the world in a realistic way, i.e., the requirement of developing one's centers in a balanced way while remaining conscientious toward others who lack such a strength. But on a deeper level, the reader is exposed and entangled into never-ending and ever-expanding, repetitive efforts and "search" for more and more information about Gurdjieff's life and teaching.

The "Elderly Persian"

The threefold nature of presentation of such data itself makes it possible for Gurdjieff to inculcate his intended "material" upon all the mental, emotional, and sensual realms of awareness of his reader so that the required material could be absorbed on the mental, feelings and instinctive levels. We know that this two- (or rather three-) fold strategy of affecting the sensibilities, the feelings, and the minds of the reader is an important aspect of the purpose of all of Gurdjieff's writings. Gurdjieff has not hidden *this* fact from us. He in fact theorizes this in the introduction through the words

of his “elderly, intelligent Persian.” Whether the reader is able to blend this explicit statement of what he says, with the implicit intentions embedded in texture, though, is another matter. Gurdjieff, after all, is writing for different readers and pupils, who possess different levels of “informedness” (M:30).

In the introduction, Gurdjieff reveals in a covert form the theory behind his whole intended strategy of hypnotism pursued in the Second Series. “Introduction” is an integral part of the text of the Second Series, and not just marginal to it. Gurdjieff pursues the “hiding thoughts” strategy in the introduction as he describes his plans for the rest of his Second Series. In this initiating fragment of his Second Series, having introduced the first of the “ancient sayings” as quoted above, Gurdjieff uses the text of a talk by an “intelligent, elderly Persian” on “contemporary literature” to indirectly present his own views on certain “matters.” He does not hide from his readers that he intends, through this talk, to convey to them “all the other thoughts, so to say, artfully embedded in this passage, thoughts that, for anyone able to decipher them, can be exceedingly valuable material for a correct understanding of what I intend to elucidate in the last two series in a form accessible to any man seeking the truth” (M:6).

What “serious thoughts” are embedded in a seemingly “outer form” discussion by the “intelligent, elderly Persian”?

An important idea embedded in the talk by the Persian is regarding what constitutes real understanding in comparison to mere thought-knowledge. Gurdjieff stresses that it is the combined blending of instinctive, mental, and emotional knowledge that brings about real understanding. Anything short of that would bring about one-sided and insufficient knowledge:

“This artificially invented grammar of the languages of today, which the younger generation everywhere is now compelled to learn, is in my opinion one of the fundamental causes of the fact that, among contemporary European people, only one of the three independent data necessary for obtaining a sane human mind has developed—namely, their so-called thought, which tends to predominate in their individuality; whereas without feeling and instinct, as every man with a normal reason must know, the real understanding accessible to man cannot be formed.” (M:14)

The “thought” just expressed by Gurdjieff through the words of the “intelligent, elderly Persian” is essential to his whole Second Series, and indeed his whole writing project. For, it is this separation of awarenesses that enables Gurdjieff to embed certain ideas in his text, often completely contradictory to one another, without expectation of “real understanding” on the part of his *casual* readers. The auto/biographical nature of the Second Series, especially, is most conducive to this writing strategy for it allows the arousal of various fragments of instinctive, emotional, and intellectual “material” in his reader that would render fruitful for Gurdjieff’s purpose,

but not necessarily comprehensible by the reader. In other words, through a threefold strategy of targeting the separate instinctive, intellectual, and emotional/subconscious realms of awareness in his readers, Gurdjieff finds it possible to “say” one thing, but actually mean another thing.

For instance, Gurdjieff may “say” that the purpose of the book is to define and show what being “remarkable” means, but in the sentence just preceding it, he has already sent a subconscious message, in the guise of a satirical tone, that it would be unquestionable that he would even be “tricking” the reader into something hidden from them. While reading the following passage, the reader may find it useful to remember how Gurdjieff elsewhere confesses to using “scatterbrained trick[s]” (L:46) in his writings:

Before going further, I consider it necessary to explain exactly the expression ‘a remarkable man’, since like all expressions for definite notions it is always understood among contemporary people in a relative, that is a purely subjective, sense.

For example, a man who does tricks is for many people a remarkable man, but even for them he ceases to be remarkable as soon as they learn the secrets of his tricks.

As a definition of who may be considered and called remarkable, I will simply say, for the present, to cut a long story short, to what men I personally apply this expression ... (M:30–31)

In the passage, Gurdjieff is explicitly rendering a definition of remarkableness, important for his writing at the intellectual level. But, implicitly, he has already cordoned off possible interpretations of his *real* intentions in the book by inserting the passage about the man who does tricks. Why does Gurdjieff do that? Why suddenly does he insert that idea into his text? The notion of preventive defense against criticisms raised against him was not unfamiliar to Gurdjieff. In the First Series, for instance, Gurdjieff imaginatively, using a seemingly innocent joke about a certain railway whistle blower,⁵ had suggested to his readers that the best way to defend yourself is to take the offensive first. But why even go to the First Series for this observation. Even in the Second Series, as one of Gurdjieff’s

5. In the First Series, Gurdjieff tells a joke about a railway station steam-whistle blower in Tiflis (B:45–49) named Karapet, who, in order to prevent the townspeople from swearing at him for disturbing their sleep every early morning, would profusely swear at them preventively before every blow so as to neutralize the impending negative vibrations they would surely be sending his way. J. Walter Driscoll reminded me on this point that the “extremely sympathetic Karapet of Tiflis—in addition to being a humorous anecdote—functions as a profound fable about Gurdjieff’s role as a Rude Awakener. This, Driscoll added, may as well be a quasi autobiographical reflection since Gurdjieff writes (M:86) that he worked for a while as a stoker at the Tiflis railway station that showed up later as a scene in the movie *Meetings with Remarkable Men*.

seven “ancient sayings” that obviously contrasts with Christ’s “Golden Rule” (M:77), Gurdjieff teaches his readers:

Strike—and you will not be struck.

But if you do not strike—they will beat you to death, like Sidor’s goat. (M:48)

Essentially, in his introduction, Gurdjieff is himself *practicing* what he simultaneously teaches at an intellectual level. He is already planting, proactively, an idea in his own defense in the texture of his writings. This example illustrates the significance of the “serious thoughts” Gurdjieff embeds in the talks of the “intelligent, elderly Persian.”

Gurdjieff’s discussion of the etymology of the word “say” and how some languages cannot express the subtleties of its manifold meanings as found in other languages (such as Persian⁶) is actually meant to indicate how the words and “sayings” he uses throughout his texts, using words and terms taken from various languages, could be intended to convey different meanings targeting various unconscious, conscious, and subconscious realms of the reader’s awareness arising from her/his separately functioning instinctive, intellectual, or emotional centers. Gurdjieff’s references even to the “intelligent, elderly Persian” as someone who possesses not just “knowledge” but “being” (M:8)—or his later discussion about the people in the West who only understand things with their “minds” compared to those from the East who even when not possessing much book knowledge know more with their “feelings” and “being”—are meant again as illustrations of this central “idea” embedded in Gurdjieff’s introduction. The use of “anecdotes and proverbs” by the “Persian”—such as that about “the Conversation of the Two Sparrows” (M:15–16)—is meant to illustrate how the same (or even an entirely different) idea could be conveyed in different forms and levels of meaning targeted for arousal of one or another of conscious, subconscious, or instinctive impulses in the reader.

The point of the above examples taken from Gurdjieff’s Second Series is to illustrate how he uses his knowledge of “three-brained” nature of human psyche in the construction of his own narrative. The various levels of meanings, of telling of stories within stories, of tangible jokes, of anecdotes arousing various feelings of pity, shame, joy, sorrow, etc., are not

6. For a reader familiar with both Persian and the Azeri dialect of Turkish, it is clear that in Gurdjieff’s writings, in almost all cases where he refers to the “Persian” language or personages, he has the Azeri dialect or ethnicity in mind. The word “diaram” which he cites as the equivalent for the word “saying” in “Persian” is actually a word in Azeri Turkish. It is not, strictly speaking, a Persian (Farsi) word. Azeris, aside from living today in their independent nation to the north of Iran today, also have historically constituted a large provincial portion of the population of Iran or “Persia”—which, generally speaking, explains why Gurdjieff refers to them or their ethnicity as “Persian.”

constructed randomly or (as Gurdjieff often claimed) “impromptu,” but developed purposely to communicate certain information, sensation, and feeling to one or another “brain” of the reader in an effort to inculcate in his reader the “material” Gurdjieff himself “required for a new creation.”

Meetings of the Remarkable Hypnotist

Having delineated the ways in which Gurdjieff embedded serious thoughts and feelings in the subtexture of his Second Series, we need to explore as well the interesting way in which Gurdjieff actually presents, in the explicit texture of his narrative, significant information about the making of his skills as a “remarkable” professional hypnotist.

Father and Dean Borsh

Gurdjieff’s experience with hypnotism began with his father. It is in this chapter of the Second Series that Gurdjieff reveals the extent to which the instinctive spiritual structure of his being was shaped in his childhood by the mythological songs *repeatedly* recited by his Ashokh father. He not only developed an interest in the science of vibrations as a result of traveling with his father to many Ashokh musical competitions (M:33–34), but also was greatly influenced by both the style and content of the stories told by his father to children and grown-ups alike. Central to these stories, told when Gurdjieff was seven to nine years old,⁷ was the epic of Gilgamesh.

Gurdjieff does not delve much into the contents of the story itself, but makes it clear how this story—and his later discovery that the epic as recited by his father was in fact an exact rendering of what later became for the first time found in the ruins of Babylon—was a great “spiritualizing factor” (M:34) for his whole being. In many ways, Gurdjieff’s “obsessive” search for “truth” in his life significantly mirrors Gilgamesh’s obsessive search for immortality in the epic. Many details of the story in fact provide clues to Gurdjieff’s life and writings later in his life. The second part of the name of Ashiata Shiemash, Gurdjieff’s favorite mythological prophet perhaps representing himself, for example, is the name of the Sun God in the Sumerian mythology as present in the epic (Sandars 1972)⁸ with which Gurdjieff must have been closely familiar through his father’s masterly recitations.

7. This must be around 1879–1881 when Gurdjieff’s father became a carpenter after the loss of his flock to cattle plague (M:34).

8. The affinity of the word “Shiemash” as pronounced by Gurdjieff and “Shamash” as presented by N. K. Sandars in *the Epic of Gilgamesh* (London: Penguin Books, 1972) is obvious. “Shamash” was Utu, the Sun God in ancient Sumerian religion. He was the judge and the law-giver (Sandars 1972:124). According to Sandars, “Shamash” was later transformed in the semitic languages of the region to what today is in Arabic and Persian “Shams” which means the Sun. It is still used in Hebrew.

Gurdjieff's account of how the epic was recited by his father, and the debates between his father and his close friend, Dean Borsh (who soon became Gurdjieff's first tutor), about the relationship between the flood as told in the epic and that in the Bible, are particularly interesting for gaining an appreciation of Gurdjieff's "automatic" exposures to the experience of being in effect hypnotized. The "indirect" method of teaching through conversations of others, the manner of telling of stories overnight until the early hours of morning, the use of parables, anecdotes, visualizations, etc., all will be preserved in the style of teaching of the elder Gurdjieff.⁹

But this inheritance from father must not be taken lightly. It is Gurdjieff's later meditations on his early life that reveal to him that what he experienced in the presence of his own father was nothing less than hypnotism. The "spiritualizing factor" that he experienced as a result of his father's stories,¹⁰ if interpreted differently, was obviously an experience in hypnotic conditioning. The old Gurdjieff will use much of the techniques learned from his father, such as teaching late into the sleepless nights, of using dialogue and parables and jokes in telling of stories, etc., in pursuing his teaching. Gurdjieff must have become aware of his father's interest, albeit in an instinctive sense, in hypnotism, for Gurdjieff cites the story of how later in life he performed experimentations with hypnotism on several people, including an Armenian woman, in his father's presence (M:43–44). After all, how could an extraordinary Ashokh, such as how Gurdjieff portrayed his father to be, not be interested in the art of influencing the deepest recesses of his audience's psyche? As a parent, Gurdjieff's father seems to have wasted no time in applying his skills, using unorthodox methods, to condition the instinctive psyche of the young Gurdjieff for the Gilgameshian travels and searches he would be conducting in his later years.

In the story of Gilgamesh—not described in any detail by Gurdjieff in the Second Series—the (anti-)climax is reached when, having endured all the hardships of this and other worlds, Gilgamesh finally finds the plant of everlasting life but immediately loses it in a brief moment of inattention when he falls asleep. Gurdjieff's obsessive search for understanding the sense

9. The New York City gathering event depicted in the "The Material Question" takes place late at night, and Gurdjieff's story of his adventures continues well into the hours of the morning. Gurdjieff's dinner meetings usually continued until late at night when the oral reading of chapters of his readings actually took place. Gurdjieff was also emphatic about the worthlessness of sleep, directing his students in the Institute to "sleep little without regret" (see Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, 1984:275).

10. In the first chapter of the First Series, "Arousing of Thought," Gurdjieff tells of other childhood experiences (with his grandmother, or while playing with other children, etc.) that in effect illustrate for him spiritualizing influences exerted in hypnotic situations. When Gurdjieff takes his oath about not using hypnosis for egotistic purposes, he does so "in a state of mind known to me," pointing to his now familiar technique of inducing new suggestion imprints through self-hypnosis.

and meaning of life and death, and the particular stress he puts on attention in his teaching and exercises commensurate with the significance of attention in inducing various hypnotic trance states, is particularly reminiscent of the mythological story of Gilgamesh. The problem of death, in particular, seems to have been as much on the mind of the young Gurdjieff as in his later years, for he tells the stories of how he questioned his father about the meanings of life and death, and whether immortality is possible (M:43). In many ways, Gurdjieff's life in obsessive search of cosmic secrets of life, death and immortality is a modern enactment of the Gilgameshian epic. The hypnotic influence of this epic on Gurdjieff's life provides the key to the mystery of Gurdjieff's deep-seated and "obsessive" search the world over for answers to the cardinal question of human existence. It was the search to understand this phenomena eating him away from inside since his early years that provided one of the important motivations for his learning about and mastering the science of hypnotism.

Gurdjieff's account of his first tutor, Dean Borsh, in the third chapter, provides another key to the mystery of Gurdjieff's searches.

Before dwelling on this matter, let us consider that a most interesting example of how Gurdjieff subtly embeds in the texture of introduction ideas which are meant to serve his immediate practical purposes at hand concerns sexuality. Criticizing the European literature, whom the "wise elderly Persian" classifies into scientific, novel (love stories), and descriptive (travelogues), he is particularly concerned with making repeated references to the problem of seeking sexual pleasure as a material not suited for his teaching purposes, or for the task of human perfection in general.

"In the narratives or, as they are otherwise called, novels—to which bulky volumes are also devoted—for the most part there are descriptions, without sparing any details, of how some John Jones and Mary Smith attain the satisfaction of their "love"—that sacred feeling which has gradually degenerated in people, owing to their weakness and will-lessness, and has now in contemporary man turned completely into a vice, whereas the possibility of its natural manifestation was given to us by our Creator for the salvation of our souls and for the mutual moral support necessary for a more or less happy life together." (M:9)

Later in the text, he again comes back to this "question which at the present time is interesting many European, as they are called, 'propagators of culture'" (M:16), and says again through the words of the "Persian":

"The Asiatic people, who are not as yet so far removed from Mother Nature, recognize with their consciousness that this psychic state which arises in both men and women is unworthy of human beings in general, and is **particularly degrading for a man**—and instinctively, they assume an attitude of contempt toward such people." (M:17; bold added)

Of course, as is evident from Gurdjieff's philosophical doctrine, the notion of sexuality for pleasure is shunned as being contrary to the twofold purpose for which it was placed in human nature: for propagation of human species, or, preventively, for self-perfection. It is then not surprising that Gurdjieff would insert such an idea into the text of his introduction, and in fact the whole of his Second Series. But the particular way the *male* side is emphasized (as evident in the above passage) seems to be noteworthy here. Is there a specific motive, in practical terms, of embedding a male-targeted concern about the issue of sexuality in the text of the Second Series?

It is amid the advisement the young Gurdjieff received from his first tutor on sexual matters that we can find traces of the deep-rooted inner conflict that led Gurdjieff himself to many of his searches about the nature of human psyche and the cosmic significance of the sex center for human perfectibility and spiritual evolution. Noteworthy is the figurative ways in which Gurdjieff recalls his first tutor's advisement about sexuality:

"If a youth but once gratify this lust before reaching adulthood, then the same would happen to him as happened to the historical Esau, who for a single mess of pottage sold his birthright, that is, the welfare of his whole life; because if a youth yields to this temptation even once, he will lose for the rest of his life the possibility of being a man of real worth.

"The gratification of lust before adulthood is like pouring alcohol into Lollavallian *madjar*.

"Just as from *madjar* into which even a single drop of alcohol has been poured only vinegar is obtained and never wine, so the gratification of lust before adulthood leads to a youth's becoming a monstrosity. But when the youth is grown up, then he can do whatever he likes; just as with *madjar*—when it is already wine you can put as much alcohol in it as you like; not only will it not be spoiled but you can obtain whatever strength you please." (M:54–55)

The mental framework, and the belief system inculcated through these figurative teaching by Dean Borsh had a lasting effect on the character and the general psyche of the young Gurdjieff. For when the forces of nature soon revealed themselves, Gurdjieff must have felt significant inner conflict over sexual matters throughout his adolescent years well into his adulthood. Gurdjieff's recollections in the Third Series of his difficulties with sexuality is a telling testimony to this conflicted reality of Gurdjieff's inner life. Gurdjieff reveals much more about this inner psychological conflict in the First Series, and to this I shall return later in this exploration. But at this point, it is interesting to observe how, soon in the narrative, Gurdjieff puts his own words and opinions into the advisements of his teacher to indicate, in fact, the inner inconsistencies and contradictions of the advisement he was receiving from him, and in general the "negligent

attitude in contemporary education” (M:55) especially about sexual matters. Because of the significance of this text, put in the words of Dean Borsh, for my later exploration I will produce it here in full:

“Until adulthood, man is not responsible for any of his acts, good or bad, voluntary or involuntary; solely responsible are the people close to him who have undertaken, consciously or owing to accidental circumstances, the obligation of preparing him for responsible life.

“The years of youth are for every human being, whether male or female, the period given for the further development of the initial conception in the mother’s womb up to, so to say, its full completion.

“From this time on, that is, from the moment the process of his development is finished, a man becomes personally responsible for all his voluntary and involuntary manifestations.

“According to laws of nature elucidated and verified through many centuries of observation by people of pure reason, this process of development is finished in males between the ages of twenty and twenty-three, and in females between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, depending on the geographical conditions of the place of their arising and formation.

“As elucidated by wise men of past epochs, these age periods have been established by nature, according to law, for the acquisition of independent being with personal responsibility for all one’s manifestations, but unfortunately at the present time they are hardly recognized at all. And this, in my opinion, is owing chiefly to the negligent attitude in contemporary education towards the question of sex, a question which plays the most important role in the life of everyone.

“As regards responsibility for their acts, most contemporary people who have reached or even somewhat passed the age of adulthood, strange as it may seem at first, may prove to be not responsible for any of their manifestations; and this, in my opinion, can be considered conforming to law.

“One of the chief causes of this absurdity is that, at this age, contemporary people in most cases lack the corresponding type of the opposite sex necessary, according to law, for the completion of their type, which, from causes not dependent upon them but ensuing, so to say, from Great Laws, is in itself a “something not complete”.

“At this age, a person who does not have near him a corresponding type of the opposite sex for the completion of his incomplete type, is nonetheless subject to the laws of nature and so cannot remain without gratification of his sexual needs. Coming in contact with a type not corresponding to his own and, owing to the law of polarity, falling in certain respects under the influence of this non-corresponding type, he loses, involuntarily and imperceptibly, almost all the typical manifestations of his individuality.

“That is why it is absolutely necessary for every person, in the process of his responsible life, to have beside him a person of the opposite sex of corresponding type for mutual completion in every respect.

“This imperative necessity was, among other things, providentially well understood by our remote ancestors in almost all past epochs and, in order to create conditions for a more or less normal collective existence, they considered it their chief task to be able to make as well and as exactly as possible the choice of types from opposite sexes.

“Most of the ancient peoples even had the custom of making these choices between the two sexes, or betrothals, in the boy’s seventh year with a girl one year old. From this time on the two families of the future couple, thus early betrothed, were under the mutual obligation of assisting the correspondence in both children of all the habits inculcated in the course of growth, such as inclinations, enthusiasms, tastes and so on.” (M:55–57)

A careful comparison of the above passage with the earlier passage containing Dean Borsh’s warnings to the young Gurdjieff not to satisfy his sexual urges, makes their contradictory nature apparent. This passage basically nulls the earlier advisement since it indicates, by repeated references to the “laws” of nature, that given the miseducation and misorganization of social arrangements with respect to sexuality, it is simply impossible to stop the young from satisfying their sexual urges as they manifest themselves early on. Besides, Gurdjieff goes even further in the above text by claiming that in fact, in his view, under the present conditions even adults cannot be held responsible for their lack of individuality due to the (sexual) miseducation and upbringing they received in their youth.

What both of the above instructions reveal, in other words, is how Gurdjieff’s respectful recollections of influences received from his first tutor on matters of sexuality are tinged with certain degree of ambivalence about their inapplicability in ordinary life. Dean Borsh’s mental inculcations and advisements to the young Gurdjieff were a source of lifelong inner conflict for the curious Gurdjieff who soon turns, as he ages, to serious scientific and spiritual investigations not only to explain but in fact to find cures for the fundamental inner conflict gripping his inner world. In time, the elder Gurdjieff finds reasons in his philosophical system to thank and appreciate this inner conflict planted in his psyche by his first tutor, for it is in the effort to understand and overcome (successfully or not) such manifestations that he found most of the fragments of his own teaching and calling in life.

The respectful resentment of Gurdjieff toward his first teacher becomes particularly apparent in the last sentence of the chapter, where he says:

Rest in peace, dear Teacher! **I do not know whether I have justified or am justifying your dreams**, but the commandments you gave me I have never once in all my life broken.” (M:57; emphasis in bold added)

Gurdjieff's search for spiritual guidance and healing methods later in life can be traced to the above passages in the chapter on Dean Borsh, and to Gurdjieff's observations in the same chapter about his own general interests in "technical specialization" that would take advantage of his education in religion and medicine (science). Citing his tutor's advisements to combine the science of the body with that of the soul, Gurdjieff remembers:

He [Dean Borsh] was in favour of my having a medical education, though not in the ordinary sense but as he understood it, that is, with the aim of becoming a physician for the body and a confessor for the soul.

I myself, however, was drawn towards quite another way of life. Having had from my early childhood an inclination for making all sorts of things, I dreamed of technical specialization. (M:53)

It is not surprising, then, that the early pursuit of Gurdjieff on the path of becoming both a priest and a physician soon led him on the path of "technical specialization" in spiritual matters centering on the question of human suggestibility and science of hypnotism. His interest in matters of life, death and immortality (inculcated in Gurdjieff's inner psyche through repeated exposure to his father's recitations of the Gilgameshian epic), combined with the real life experience of death of his older sister around the same age and other surrounding childhood events related to matters of life and death, provided significant fuel to the young Gurdjieff's search after truths about spiritual matters.

Bogachevsky

The fourth chapter on Bogachevsky depicts a crucial period and influence in the young Gurdjieff's life. The instinctive and mental structures of Gurdjieff's psyche shaped by his father and first tutor come into a sharp conflict during the emotionally charged years of Gurdjieff's acquaintance with Bogachevsky (later called, Father Evlissi). This young priest who assumed the role of Gurdjieff's tutor in the absence of Dean Borsh, and who later became in his old age a significant abbot in the chief monastery of the Essene Brotherhood, exerted a significant shock to the young Gurdjieff's already ingrained searches for answers to spiritual questions, awakening his "ever-continuing interest in abstract questions" (M:59).

Gurdjieff acknowledges in this chapter that it was through Bogachevsky and his comrades that he first learned (M:60) about spiritual matters such as "magnetism, the law of attraction, auto-suggestion" (M:59), etc. The coincidence of the death of his favorite sister, and the discussion this brought up about the possibility of communicating with her soul through "table-turning," and the actual experimentation with the latter involving Bogachevsky and his friends, exposed the young Gurdjieff with issues that left him bewildered, and in search of answers. Advisement from elders that

such experimentations involved tricks did not discourage the young Gurdjieff away from the significance of issues being raised, leading to his obsessive reading of anything he could find about magic, hypnotism, neuropathology, and other psychological and spiritual matters.

Many incidents also deeply fueled Gurdjieff's search, beginning with the foretelling of a certain dervish about his accident with fire-arm and his developing a carbuncle on his leg. Gurdjieff's own witnessing of how the dervish put himself into a hypnotic trance using candles and his thumb-nail was particularly instructive regarding the spiritual possibilities latent in human psyche. Another important event around the same time that forever etched a place in Gurdjieff's memory (he even remembered the exact year in 1888) was his witnessing a Yezidi boy's inability to get out of a circle. Gurdjieff not only later found that this is caused by special "spells" induced on Yezidis by their priests, but also even experimented with them in trying to observe what happens when they are physically forced out of the circle (M:65–66). The young Gurdjieff was himself deeply in shock and obsessed with finding answers to these questions:

The more I realized how difficult it was to find a solution, the more I was gnawed by the worm of curiosity. For several days I was not myself and did not wish to do anything. I thought and thought of one thing: "What is true? What is written in books and taught by my teachers, or the facts I am always running up against?" (M:70)

Other incidents such as witnessing the unconscious body of a Tartar, who is then put to death by elders in fear of his being possessed by the devil, further fueled Gurdjieff's search. As is evident throughout the text, Gurdjieff not only explains in highly figurative terms his inner emotional turmoil at this time, but effectively conveys to the reader how important such a state is for serious seekers of truth about spiritual matters.

An important element Gurdjieff inserts into the teaching and influence received from Bogachevsky on the emotional functionings of human psyche has to do with the problem of conscience. In the concluding passages of the chapter, Gurdjieff provides his teacher's (or his own) views on the distinction between culturally bound, automatic, and subjective morality that is acquired in life, and the objective morality that accompanies the direct experience of real conscience. Being the seat of conscience, the emotional center, and the figurative expositions Gurdjieff presents about the emotional center and consciences seated in it provide important clues about the enneagramatic mapping of Gurdjieff's autobiographical narrations.

Pogossian and Yelov

Gurdjieff's preoccupations with hypnotism and human psyche appear in the chapters on Pogossian and Abram Yelov in more consciously

experienced ways. Following a near-death experience he recollects in a later chapter, and having become despaired in finding real answers in contemporary scientific books on hypnotism, Gurdjieff embarks on a search among various religions to find answers to his dilemmas. With Pogossian he finds traces of possible answers in the ancient “Sarmoung Brotherhood” to contact which they both travel to the wider region. The account of their discovery of the map of the “pre-sand Egypt” and how it led Gurdjieff to Egypt provides an important window to Gurdjieff’s continuing, obsessive search for his spiritual answers. Pogossian’s leaving his school of priesthood to become a mechanical engineer, and his “highly original feature” (M:106) of performing physical work in a conscious way believing that “no conscious work is ever wasted” provide Gurdjieff with important instructive clues regarding the possibilities latent in human psyche when the physical-instinctive and mental functionings communicate with one another through conscious self-suggestive mechanisms. The same link, but this time regarding conscious mental labor, is later observed by Gurdjieff while reviewing the life of Abram Yelov and his relations with him. Yelov’s extraordinarily organized mind and talent for many languages, in Gurdjieff’s opinion, were made possible with the conscious use of human mental energy while performing various daily tasks.

Prince Lubovedsky (Soloviev, Vitvitskaya, and Philos the Dog)

Gurdjieff’s increasing mastery of hypnotic skills is rendered evident in the following major chapter on Prince Lubovedsky. The personage Soloviev, inserted in this chapter, represents an inner emotional state deeply habituated and addicted to alcohol whom Gurdjieff manages to cure with a masterful application of his hypnotic skills (M:147). The personage of Vitvitskaya, an emotionally abused young woman and potential victim of white slave trade, represents again the possibility of (self-) healing through application of spiritual skills and arts, especially the science of vibrations and music. Gurdjieff’s paradoxical insertion of the story of his faithful dog Philos in the pages of this chapter demonstrates in effect the degree to which even animals (or, as Gurdjieff’s Beelzebub would call them, “two-brained beings” who possess physical and emotional center and not the mental) could come under hypnotic influence when applied effectively. As we shall see, in the First Series, Gurdjieff in fact affirms the possibility of hypnotizing two-brained, and even one-brained, beings.

The main personage of the chapter, that is Prince Lubovedsky, sets an important stage in Gurdjieff’s search in developing his spiritual knowledge and skills. The “extraordinary being,” the Tamil elder, whom the Prince meets in his searches and who leads him to the Sarmoung Brotherhood obviously possesses, in Gurdjieff’s portrayal of him, telepathic and hypnotic skills. The monastery where the Prince finds himself and later welcomes the

young and still wandering Gurdjieff is portrayed as including important physical and instructional materials for learning about the ancient sciences of human psyche, physical movements, and spiritual dances. Gurdjieff's intentionally censored description of the inner life and nature of the school adds much fuel to the curiosity of the reader in regard to the sources and origins of his teaching. It is in *Herald*, though, that Gurdjieff especially reveals the extent to which a certain dervish monastery "in the heart of Asia" was involved in similar "scientific" studies and experimentations with human psyche as was Gurdjieff himself. It was in making special arrangements with such a monastery that Gurdjieff, buried in his continuing explorations in the science of hypnotism, sent "27 of both sexes" to them in return for proper training and instruction (H:60). Whether or not that monastery was the same as that depicted in the chapter on the Prince is, of course, not clear from Gurdjieff's narrative.

Ekim Bey

Ekim Bey, who Gurdjieff considers to be "remarkable, and whose manner of life in his later years, either by the will of fate or thanks to the laws operating in a 'self-developed individuality', was arranged down to the smallest detail like my own" (M:177), is of course no one but a professional "magician and wizard" with extraordinary skills in hypnotism. Suggesting that Ekim Bey was at the time of his writing in apparently good physical health, but not so internally, Gurdjieff recalls one of the major expeditions he conducted with him and other members of the "Seekers after Truth" during which Ekim Bey found an opportunity to reveal to an elderly Persian dervish his inner turmoil arising from certain inner struggle going on in him. Begging for instructions and guidance about what to do about this struggle, Ekim Bey is initiated into important data about the "physical body of man" whose nature is of course, for reasons already explained above, withheld and only promised by Gurdjieff to be presented in the Third Series.

What is noteworthy here is that this "remarkable" man whose details of life is so close to that of Gurdjieff as if arisen from the same source (M:177), has not only experienced "tormenting inner struggle" of unspecified character, but also possesses "ardent interest in hypnotism and everything relating to it" (M:191) in which he obtains "unprecedented practical results" (M:192). Gurdjieff's account toward the end of the eighth chapter of his adventures with Ekim Bey in performing magic and demonstrations of hypnotism is quite telling of the degree to which by this time Gurdjieff had been interested in and preoccupied with developing his skills as a professional hypnotist. At the end of the chapter on Ekim Bey, Gurdjieff makes the following brief, but important, reference to how the West has yet to recognize the degree of advance made among the Asiatic people in the area of human psychology:

Having lived fifteen years uninterruptedly in the West, and being constantly in contact with people of all nationalities, I have come to the conclusion that no one in Europe knows or has any idea about Asia...

... among these "savage groups" certain sciences, as, for example, medicine, astrology, natural science and so on, without any wisecracking or hypothetical explanations, have long since attained a degree of perfection which European civilization may perhaps reach only after several hundred years. (M:198)

Karpenko and Skridlov

Gurdjieff's story of Karpenko and Skridlov in the last two chapters of the Second Series provide further information about the nature of Gurdjieff's interest, knowledge, and skills in intentional development of higher functionings of the mental and emotional centers. For reasons having to do (as explained above) with the purpose of his Second Series, Gurdjieff does not reveal the nature of the initiatory information he learned from the two elders he met in accompaniment of these two personages about the astral and divine bodies. But the nature of powers manifested by these elders, as portrayed of course in Gurdjieff's narrative, suggests important relevance to him of his professional interest in hypnotism and the "remarkable" nature of their presence as experienced by Gurdjieff during his travels.

The references in the preceding pages to Gurdjieff's interest, knowledge, and skills in hypnotism are not anything new. Gurdjieff of course never denied such interests and skills. Revealing though, as far as the purpose of the Second Series is concerned, is to see how the "sound and good quality" of being remarkable in terms of the conscious ability to balance one's inner nature and manifestations is inevitably dependent upon having deep interest, knowledge, and skills in matters related to hypnosis. The "remarkable men" whose presence and influence Gurdjieff considers as indispensable "material required for a new creation" cannot be so without special knowledge and skills in the science of hypnotism. Gurdjieff also incorporates the concern with how to use (and not abuse) such hypnotic powers in relation to others as a defining feature of his notion of remarkableness. The Second Series reveals not only how Gurdjieff's own interest and skills in this matter matured under the influence of the "remarkable men" he met during his life, but itself demonstrates a skillful application of this science in the literary field.

To understand how exactly Gurdjieff achieved the "unprecedented result" of exerting the hypnotic influence of his life and teaching through his writings, we need now to turn to his magnum opus, the First Series, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*.

Chapter Eight **BEELZEBUB'S HYPNOTIC TALES TO HIS GRANDSON**

FIRST SERIES: To destroy, mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world.

—B:v

... I already consider it my duty to make a confession and hence before continuing this first chapter, which is by way of an introduction to all my further predetermined writings, I wish to bring to the knowledge of what is called your "pure waking consciousness" the fact that in the writings following this chapter of warning I shall expound my thoughts intentionally in such sequence and with such "logical confrontation," that the essence of certain real notions may of themselves automatically, so to say, go from this "waking consciousness"—which most people in their ignorance mistake for the real consciousness, but which I affirm and experimentally prove is the fictitious one—into what you call the subconscious, which ought to be in my opinion the real human consciousness, and there by themselves mechanically bring about that transformation which should in general proceed in the entirety of a man and give him, from his own conscious mentation, the results he ought to have, which are proper to man and not merely to single- or double-brained animals.

—B:24–25

Gurdjieff's aim in the First Series is to mercilessly destroy all the non-veritable and fantastic views and beliefs about the world his readers hold in their thoughts and feelings. Most puzzling, however, is that he seeks to accomplish this aim via what seems to be, at least in form, equally non-veritable and fantastic beliefs contained in Beelzebub's tales to his grandson.

Is there a reason to believe that Gurdjieff's story of revolution and counter-revolution in Atlantis (B:109-120), his reverse theory of descent of ape from man (B:272-86), the "Arch-absurd" idea that Sun neither lights nor heats (B:134-148), or, what's more obvious, Gurdjieff's pretension to having archangelic access to God's knowledge about the universe *before* creation (as previously presented), are any less non-veritable and fantastic than the belief system Gurdjieff seeks to destroy in his readers?

That the overall dramaturgy of Beelzebub's tales to his grandson, Hasein, is an intentionally and "artfully" constructed cosmic story of non-veritable and fantastic mythology for the purpose of "concealing serious thoughts in an enticing, easily grasped outer form" (M:7) should be obvious for any "brave reader" who embarks on reading the very long narrative containing equally long sentences and novel terms. But the outer form of the First Series is still not as "easily graspable" as those of the Second or Third Series, to be sure, and it renders it difficult for even a serious reader to harvest fragments of Gurdjieff's teaching scattered throughout its tales.

The First Series is a monumental work, and my purpose in this chapter will not be to explore all or even most of its tales and dimensions. In Chapters One through Five, I tried to decipher some essential elements and fragments of Gurdjieff's teaching as presented in the First Series along with the rest of his writings, including his "organ Kundabuffer" theory of human disharmonization that points to the sex-center-rooted human propensity for suggestibility and hypnotism as a primary causal and explanatory factor for humanity's misfortunes. My aim in this chapter, rather, is to uncover any clues that Gurdjieff himself left about what his *actual* intentions were in writing the First (and other) Series, by building on my preceding examinations of the Third and Second Series.

In contrast to the Second and Third Series that deal with the teacher and the organizational matters of his teaching respectively, the First Series aims to present to the reader "all and everything" essential to Gurdjieff's teaching. My purpose in revisiting this text, however, is to explore, in light of the preceding findings in Chapters Six and Seven, whether and how Gurdjieff actually viewed his writing as an "objective art" and innovative literary experimentation in his "technical specialization" of hypnotism. What exactly is hypnotism in Gurdjieff's view? How does it work, according to him? In what ways can it be practiced, in his opinion? Does Gurdjieff think that hypnotism can be exercised through writing?¹

The Scenario of the First Series

It should not be surprising to find, again, the key to the “enigmas” of Gurdjieff’s teaching and life (as also portrayed in the First Series) in the pages of his disclaimed booklet *Herald*. It is indeed in this source—intended to be a “Habarchi” (H:86) (“news-bringer” or “town-crier” in Persian/Azeri) for the then “imminent” publication of all (and especially the First Series) of Gurdjieff’s writings—that we find an explicit acknowledgment of his consideration of his writings as an exercise in the science and art of hypnotism.

In *Herald*, Gurdjieff tells his readers (H:41) that upon gradual recovery from his serious auto accident in 1924, he began to ponder over how to diminish his moral sufferings in the context of his inability to pursue his life and teaching as previously planned. At this time, he suddenly came to the realization that instead of relying on certain of his “specially trained” pupils (such as P. D. Ouspensky) in whom he had previously laid hopes for writing about his teaching, he could begin writing himself. He then immediately embarked on dictating his ideas to those nearby.

We learn from Gurdjieff that his first few attempts at composition were short pieces written as scenarios “suitable for theatre or cinema” (H:42). A particular piece he titled “Three Brothers” was particularly important for him as it, and the experience that led to its composition, gave him the essential hint for the purpose and organization of his First Series later on. The experience mentioned was simply the occasion of going to a movie in Paris at the insistence of those accompanying him on a short trip during his recovery. The movie, titled “Two-Brothers,” for which they paid an “astronomical” sum given its popularity and shortage of tickets, proved to be, for Gurdjieff, nothing but a “general hypnotic-process”:

I do not consider it necessary to repeat here the contents of that nonsense, which was the “pick” of the season, but I must say that sitting in that room overcrowded with people who, on account of bad ventilation were obliged to breathe bad air, I, unable to get out, was compelled willy-nilly to look at the film, and to look intensely, for the focus of my sight was not yet re-established, and I had to fix the various objects sometimes with one eye and sometimes with the other, and the whole time I felt revolted by such senseless “fashionable bluff”, the popularity of which was due entirely to the **herd-instinct**, especially prevalent among people today.

1. As previously noted in the Prologue, the purpose of this study is *not* to expound upon the vast literature on hypnosis and hypnotism, nor is it to judge whether or not Gurdjieff’s definition and practice of hypnotism are valid and effective. This is an important distinction to keep in mind regarding this study as an effort in hermeneutic analysis. My purpose here is to explore how Gurdjieff *himself*, through his *own writings*, conceived of the nature and purpose of his teaching and the role played by hypnosis in it.

At the close of this, what I should call, “**general hypnotic-process**” in order to fix **firmly some formerly suggested** ideas, I, “hobbling” and supported by my companions, returned to the Cafe de la Paix, which later became my Paris “office”, and regaining my calm, began to form in my mind the outline of the scenario which I have called “The Three Brothers”. (H:43–44; bold added)

Gurdjieff’s hint above at the similarity of literary and cinematic compositions as being both “general hypnotic” processes is noteworthy. Noteworthy also is that despite disregarding the cinema as producing “senseless, fashionable bluff” feeding the “herd-instinct”² of the audience, he immediately decided to adopt the same structure of the scenario of the film for his writings. What followed this decision is particularly important for understanding the origins of the literary style of the “Three-Brothers” scenario as a conversation between *three inner parts of the human organism*:

In this scenario three brothers act instead of two, and all their manifestations and inter-relations are compared by me to the manifestations and inter-relations of the three separate, independently formed and relatively educated parts of man’s general entirety, representing, in fact, firstly, the physical, secondly, the astral, and thirdly, the mental body of man; and, in the dialogues of the three characters, in the form of a discussion, that is, affirming and denying, I introduced certain ideas which have come down to us from ancient times, when the science of medicine was very highly developed, ideas of what is useful or harmful, satisfactory or unsatisfactory for one or other of the characters of the scenario in the process of transforming of this or that substance. (H:44)

The above reference to the “science of medicine” is in and of itself interesting, if we keep in mind Gurdjieff’s claim that the science of hypnotism in the East, and the advance of medicine there in general, still far surpass those in the West (see the epigraphs to this book). However, for my immediate purpose here, note that it was the further elaborations on this basic structure of “three brothers” and its merging with another scenario—based on “a legend [Gurdjieff] had heard in childhood about the appearance, of the first human beings on Earth and of which [he] had made Beelzebub, as a likely witness of this appearance, the principal hero” (H:44)—that led Gurdjieff to the literary style of the First Series as a whole. This flexible conversational style allowed him to insert almost unlimited fragments of his ideas as smaller scenarios into a now grand “master-work.”

The “three brothers” in the First Series, of course, are Beelzebub, his grandson Hassein, and the often quiet and seemingly marginal personal

2. In his writings, Gurdjieff is more than emphatic in describing how he had a lifelong interest in studying this “herd instinct” among the masses and for this purpose often, on purpose, he inserted himself amid ongoing conflicts, wars, and revolutions.

servant Ahoon. They respectively represent the mental, the emotional, and the physical parts. Of whom? Of course, of Gurdjieff himself and the human organism in general. The First Series, at one level, is the psychological biography of Gurdjieff himself wrapped in non-verifiable and fantastic mythological clothing. At another level, it is an illustration by example of the inner conversations that should and could be proceeding across the three "brains" of any human organism. There is of course much "serious thoughts" concealed in this dialogue. But there are also more reasons behind writing the long, 1,238-page, tract than first meets the eye.

That the First Series is a concealed psycho-intellectual autobiography of Gurdjieff himself is apparent in most of the fragmented "scenarios" developed in the text. But, less obvious, yet most telling and mysteriously designed, aspect of the storytelling in the First Series, is in fact the behavior of the silent Ahoon. Being a "devoted old servant," he rarely intercedes in the conversation. But at the climax of the story, soon after Beelzebub acquires his cosmically rare fifth horn on his head indicating his evolution to the highest possible level of intelligence for any being before the "Reason of Sacred Anklad," one of the last crucial paragraphs of the First Series is suddenly devoted to an important "confession" by the old servant:

"Sacred Podkoolad of our Great Megalocosmos! Have mercy upon me and pardon me, an unfortunate ordinary three-centered being, for my past disrespectful manifestations, voluntary or involuntary, towards Your Sacred Essence.

"Have mercy and pardon me: just this three-centered being, who, though he has existed a very long time, yet to his misfortune—only because in his preparatory age nobody aided the crystallization in him of the data for the ability of intensively actualizing being-Partkdolg-duty—had until now been so shortsighted that he had been unable to sense the reality present beneath an exterior with which, according to the common-cosmic Trogoautoegocrat, all those existing and newly arising units of the Megalocosmos are coated, who ought to have in their presence that sacred 'something' which is called Reason." (B:1179)

This confession on the part of Ahoon is in effect a confession on the part of Gurdjieff in regard to the long-standing inner conflicts of his own inner psyche emanating from ill-educations during his preparatory age, rendering him vulnerable to weaknesses in regard to physical and sexual wants and desires. This interpretation becomes particularly apparent in the manner in which Beelzebub reacts to the confessions uttered by his physical "brother":

Having said this, Ahoon stood as if sunk in a stupor of silent expectancy.

And Beelzebub, also in silence, gazed at him with a look which though perceived externally from without, was full of love and forgiveness, yet there could be felt in it also His Essence-grief and inevitable resignation. (B:1179)

During this confessional episode, Hasein, representing Gurdjieff's emotional part, remains detached and observing as a hermit, expressing love to both his Grandfather and the servant Ahoon (M:1179). This is a special meditative moment for the author of *Beelzebub*, as deep-rooted self-hypnotic suggestions are being communicated across the three brains—one of those moments Gurdjieff elsewhere refers to as “the state of mind known to me” where significant lifelong realizations, decisions, or vows are made.³

The significance of the dialogue just cited, however, goes beyond that of simply being an illustration of how the “three brothers” scenario is played out in the First Series in terms of an inner dialogue among Gurdjieff's own selves and his confessions and self-hypnotic healing efforts. It also helps to illustrate how the First Series is meant to be also one of a “general hypnotic-process” influencing the reader.⁴ The various characters that appear in the course of the cosmic story depicted in the First Series, in other words, are more or less the multiple identities and selves appearing and receding in the psychological panorama of Gurdjieff's readers as well.

My primary concern here, therefore, is not to expose the substantive dimension of this inner dialogue on the part of Gurdjieff. To an extent I have already undertaken this task in the expository sections of Gurdjieff's teaching and life in earlier chapters of this book. My purpose here, rather, is

3. Regarding the significance of repetition for the hypnotic practice, especially using writings on a piece of paper, note the following advice given by Gurdjieff in *Views from the Real World* (1984:92). I appreciate J. Walter Driscoll for bringing this passage to my attention:

Question: I frequently remember my aim but I have not the energy to do what I feel I should do.

Answer: Man has no energy to fulfill voluntary aims because all his strength, acquired at night during his passive state, is used up in negative manifestations. These are automatic manifestations, the opposite of his positive, willed manifestations.

For those of you who are already able to remember your aim automatically, but have no strength to do it: Sit for a period of at least one hour alone. Make all your muscles relaxed. Allow your associations to proceed but do not be absorbed by them. Say to them: “If you will let me do as I wish now, I shall later grant you your wish.” Look at your associations as though they belong to someone else, to keep yourself from identifying with them.

At the end of an hour take a piece of paper and write your aim on it. Make this paper your God. Everything else is nothing. Take it out of your pocket and read it constantly, every day. In this way it becomes part of you, at first theoretically, later actually. To gain energy, practice this exercise of sitting still and making your muscles dead. Only when everything in you is quiet for an hour, make your decision about your aim. Don't let associations absorb you. To make a voluntary aim, to achieve it, gives magnetism and the ability to do.

4. This twofold aim is not surprising for a Gurdjieff who repeatedly recites, and urges his readers to follow, this saying of his folklore hero, the venerable Mullah Nassr Eddin: “Always and in everything strive to attain at the same time what is useful for others and what is pleasant for oneself” (M:29).

to understand how Gurdjieff conceives of and implements the nature and workings of the “general hypnotic process” in his First Series. What are Gurdjieff’s “technically specialist” views on and methods of hypnotism?

Gurdjieff introduces the nature and practice of hypnotism into the First Series at two levels: 1-consciously, at the level of reader’s “*mentation*,” defining what it is and his own approach to it; 2-subconsciously, at the level of reader’s “*feelings*,” by applying his hypnotic skills in the construction of the whole text itself. In other words, he both talks about it, and does it. I will deal with both of these in turn.

Gurdjieff’s Views on the Nature of Hypnotism

Gurdjieff’s explicit expositions on hypnotism in the First Series are presented in two consecutive chapters, one titled “Hypnotism” and the next “Beelzebub as a Professional Hypnotist” (B:558–90). Interestingly, two paragraphs omitted from the first edition of the First Series (1950), restored in subsequent editions, are also relevant to his views on hypnosis.

Beelzebub begins by explaining that he outwardly adopted the profession of a “physician-hypnotist” during his “sixth sojourn” to Earth in order to gain unlimited access to the “inner world” of people of all classes and castes and also, in the meantime, to heal some of their maladies (B:558). In fact, significantly, at the very outset Beelzebub subtly conveys that he has used his hypnotic methods in elucidating his tales to his grandson, Hassein, himself:

“I may say that I already had a very wide experience in this specialty, having during my previous elucidation of certain subtle points of the psyche of individual favorites of yours many times had recourse to methods used there by such a kind of physician.” (B:558)

The propensity to be hypnotized, Gurdjieff suggests, arose historically (and arises biographically) from the disharmonization of the functioning of human consciousness, namely the splitting of “being consciousness” into two realms of waking consciousness and subconsciousness (B:558–59). To understand this process, however, requires that the reader be aware of her or his own separate inner functionings and apply all of them to elucidate Gurdjieff’s exposition. The significance of the split in consciousness that makes hypnotism possible, according to Gurdjieff, nearly explains (the *inner*) half of all the causes of failures of human beings to have a normal life on Earth (B:559), the other half being, as he repeatedly states elsewhere in the First Series, the abnormal conditions of *outer* life they (given such abnormal psychic properties) have established on Earth themselves—of which Gurdjieff particularly stresses the system of education. In this sense, the Earthly experience is quite unique:

“This psychic particularity, namely, of falling into a ‘hypnotic state,’ is, as I have already said, inherent to the three-brained beings only of this planet of

yours, and one can therefore say that if they did not exist, then in all our Great Universe there would not exist in general even a being-notion of ‘hypnotism.’” (B:559)

Gurdjieff suggests that given the centuries of arising of such a disharmonious and hypnotizable state in their inner world, human beings have forgotten a sense of their normal condition and become accustomed to their general hypnotic state, and only when this state takes place in a “concentrated” and “accelerated” state do they actually recognize it as being “abnormal” in their psyche, whereas in general they in fact themselves live in such a state all along in their everyday lives.

Gurdjieff claims that this state was noticed and its subject taken seriously as a branch of science for the first time in Central Asia in ancient times and its study given the name “non-responsible-manifestations-of-personality” (B:560)—or what he elsewhere calls “Mehkeness” or “taking-away-of-responsibility” (H:19) and uses the invented word “Sakookinoltooriko” (B:530) to name this branch of knowledge. Gurdjieff indicates that this ancient science, having been forgotten for many centuries, was (then recently) revived by Franz A. Mesmer (1734–1815) in the West, but given the negative attitudes developed toward him in professional medicine, it met with obstacles. For Gurdjieff, this was unfortunate, for only through knowledge and application of this science, and sharing it openly with others, he believes, can “consequences of the properties of the organ Kundabuffer” (that is, the propensity of human psyche to be subconsciously habituated to imagined and illusory things) be removed (B:562).

Gurdjieff explains the possibility of hypnotic state by suggesting that the splitting of consciousness into two independently functioning waking conscious and subconscious parts makes it possible for the waking conscious part to go on to a state of sleep while the planetary body continues to subconsciously (or automatically) function as if in a waking state (B:564). The implication of this is that such a state would not have been possible if the inner harmony and communicability of the “three-brains” had been present in a unified fashion. The “individual” organism would have been either completely sleep or, if “consciously perfected,” in an “all-centers-awake” state, able to think and feel on its own initiative (L:145). But, now, it is possible for the organism to “lose its responsibility,” that is, its waking conscious center to go to sleep while its other centers continue to be operative in an automatic state on their own and in fact come under the influence and direction of an external conscious source.

According to Gurdjieff, once split, two factors contributed to the perpetuation of this fragmented and disharmonized psychic state in human organism. On the one hand, nature adapted to this dual functioning of human organism by engendering at a certain age two “blood circulations” of different tempos in the human organism, depending on the “difference-

of-the-filling-of-the-blood-vessels" (B:565). The "center-of-gravity-of-the-blood-pressure" (B:565), in other words, came to be concentrated in one or another part of the blood vessels depending on whether the organism is in the waking conscious or in the passive (hypnotic/sleep) states. On the other hand, socially, the system of education became one-sidedly focused on developing the conscious/mental aspect, thereby further perpetuating the splitting of the mental from the emotional and instinctive minds, while relegating the possibility of experiencing genuine being-impulses such as "faith, hope, love, and conscience" to the deep recesses of the subconscious mind, laying dormant there in an "almost primitive state" (B:566).

An important consequence of this isolation in the subconscious mind, due to miseducation, of those genuine impulses emanating from the active functioning of the waking consciousness is that upon reception of accidental impressions through all the "six" (B:566) sense organs, the impulses take a life of their own, becoming in different localizations false centers of gravity for the organism and dominating its functioning as a whole. The action of these accidentally received impressions, then, takes over the "responsible" functioning of the planetary body, substituting for what would have otherwise been the control of the organism by an "objective consciousness" operating in unison across all the three centers. No longer being responsible and in control of their organism when confronted with those inevitable outside stimuli, then, humans in their naivete call these planetary impulses merely "animal instincts" (B:567), hence the phrase "animal magnetism."

On the flip side of this, the genuine impulses isolated and undeveloped in the subconscious mind—that continue to exist in a primitive state without the possibility of development through merging with logical reasoning during waking consciousness—upon automatic activation produce only absolute either/or manifestations of love/hate, hope/despair, and faith/disbelief. It is based on this evaluation of the role played by (mis)education in the disharmonization of human psyche that Gurdjieff derives his solutions involving the widespread adaptation of the educational system to the education especially of the subconscious mind in addition to the education of the purely mental and/or physical centers (B:567).

For Gurdjieff, hypnosis would not be possible if human beings were "individuals," indivisible and whole. It is the state of multiplicity of centers and selves afflicting the organism that makes it possible for it to become hypnotizable. It is in a state of multiplicity that one can say one thing, and do another, that one can lose "responsibility" of oneself while transferring the same to others, i.e., falling under others' influences. Gurdjieff's theory of hypnosis is based on his cosmic theory of evolution of higher-being-bodies in humans. As there are three, planetary, Kesdjan, and Soul bodies possible in human evolution to make way for the permanent "I," there are

three aspects to the “being-blood” present in the organism—each higher aspect becoming present when its associated being body is completely formed. “Hanbledzoin” and “Aiësakhaldan” are the terms he uses for the aspects of the “blood” respectively associated with the higher Kesdjan and Divine bodies. If the planetary blood nourishes upon the first being food (ordinary food/drink), Hanbledzoin nourishes upon the emanations from planets and the Sun through the second being food (air), and Aiësakhaldan nourishes upon emanations from “the Most Holy Sun Absolute” exclusively through contemplation by the whole organism using “the cognized intention on the part of all their spiritualized independent parts” (B:569).

Concentrated and emotionally equanimous attention on the circulation of air through breathing, and continual contemplation on the circulation of impressions having to do with the spiritual meaning and purpose of life (and death) in the universe, are the “bloods” of the Kesdjan and the Soul bodies. In a harmonious human organism, all three of these “bloods” flow in continual and reciprocal interaction and feeding of one another. Their “blended” circulation assures continual “all-centers-awake” state of the organism while, conversely, the interruption of any can put the organism in a state of hypnotic (or, in case of the planetary blood, permanent) sleep. A skilled hypnotist, by interrupting the flow of the “concentrated” blood of attention and watchful self-observation and self-remembering, can induce a state where the organism becomes open to impulses given from above, and thereby lose “responsibility” for itself. In the “omitted” passages from the First Series, this process is elaborated upon as follows:

“So, my boy, when the hypnotist, by modifying the tempo of their blood circulation, temporarily suspends the action of the localization of their false consciousness—now the ruling master of their common presence—the **sacred data of their genuine consciousness can blend freely during their ‘waking’ state with the entire functioning of their planetary body.** If then he rightly assists the crystallization of data evoking in that localization an idea contrary to what has been fixed there, and directs the results of that idea upon the disharmonized part of the planetary body, an accelerated modification of the circulation of the blood in that part can be produced.

“During the era of the Tikliamishian civilization, when learned beings from the country Maralpleicie first discovered the possibility of such combinations in their common psyche and tried to put one another at will into that special state, they began to understand its use, and soon found a way of summoning it to the aid of the being-hanbledzoin, that cosmic substance whose essence the three-brained beings of contemporary civilization came close to understanding, and which they named animal magnetism.” (bold added)⁵

While tracing the origins of the modern “science” of hypnotism, Gurdjieff suggests that the arising of a state of hypnotism, as discovered in the West,

is associated with the long-term gaze at a shiny object, such as a "Persian turquoise," the intensity of which is dependent on the previous impressions experienced by the person being hypnotized. Such a state of hypnosis is accompanied by becoming pale in the face, petrified so to speak, and then followed by automatic behavior according to a previously desired impulse:

"... in almost any one of the three-brained beings without distinction of sex who gazed for a long time at shining and brilliant objects of a certain kind, there begins to proceed a state similar to the one which proceeded with the first subject of their experiments; and secondly, they noticed further that the form of manifestation of the subject during the state varies and is found to be dependent on the former being-experiences which chanced to be predominant and on the shining objects with which a connection was accidentally established during such experiences of theirs." (B:575)

As we shall see, the introduction of "scatterbrained" ideas into the "blood" stream of waking consciousness and its daily flow, for instance, when coupled with impulses of deep curiosity, awe, and puzzlement, can cause the organism's conscious focus to become diverted from itself and attracted to the "magnetic" pull of the source of that curiosity and enigma.

The hypnotic state allows the subject's previously fixated impressions to be transformed in "an accelerated way" (B:576) and it is this aspect of the experience which, for Gurdjieff, renders the experience useful for healing purposes. But the possibility of hypnosis also has caused, Gurdjieff stresses (B:577), considerable misuses of it, depriving it of the "sacred" purpose for which it can be used, and threatening the hypnotized with all kinds of risks of physical and psychological injury. It is in this last regard that he finds it fortunate that "other methods besides the one first discovered ..., namely the gazing at a shining brilliant object" (B:578) are not made public. To characterize its proper employment, Gurdjieff's Beelzebub reminisces about his observations of the Tikliamishian civilization where, once they determined that by means of hypnotism they could destroy in each other certain properties particularly unbecoming to them, this state began to be regarded as a sacred process and was performed only in their temples before the congregation (B:578). This need for guarded use of the knowledge of hypnotism may also indicate why he uses a variety of literary strategies to camouflage the kernel of his thoughts and intentions on the subject.

But, as his exposition continues into the following chapter, Gurdjieff provides important hints at what those "other methods" can be. It seems that his intention has indeed been to leave "all and everything" needed for deciphering his method, provided there are serious "seekers."

5. Passages omitted from page 568 of the 1950 edition of *Beelzebub*, corrected in *Guide and Index to G. I. Gurdjieff's All and Everything: Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* (England: Hazel Watson & Viney Ltd., 1971: 673).

Gurdjieff's Literary Hypnotism

Gurdjieff acknowledges that during his occupation as a “professional hypnotist” he used this psychic state in his subjects to pursue his aims. His own method for arising such a state in them was, at first, what he refers to as “acting upon them with my own Hanbledzoin” (B:579). But, apparently, the expenditure of his own “Hanbledzoin” energy in this regard soon proved to be very harmful for his health. On the one hand, he had to continually expand his own “energy” in the process and stake his own life in the process of challenges and mishappenings that may ensue. Besides, given the increasing number of subjects toward whom he felt “love-of-kind” (B:579) and in whom he needed to produce that state in order to make possible their healing, he had to find other means of hypnotizing them more efficiently and widely. So he “invented” a new method:

“I then invented and very soon became expert in quickly changing the mentioned ‘difference-of-the-filling-of-the-blood-vessels’ by means of a certain hindering of the movement of the blood in certain blood vessels.

“This new means of mine proved of course incomparably better than that which is used even up till now by beings of your planet, who make the person they hypnotize gaze at a shining or brilliant object.” (B:579–80)

Gurdjieff’s “new means” is not described in any detail than expressed above, but it gives the reader an impression that for its implementation Gurdjieff’s physical presence is still necessary. In other words, it is as a result of certain direct bodily action by Gurdjieff on the body of the subject that the necessary change in the “blood pressure” as a basis for the arousal of the hypnotic state takes place. If this would not have been the case, Gurdjieff would not have claimed, in the same text, that through such “definite action upon the ‘blood-vessels’ themselves” (B:580), he could bring to this state not only any human as a three-brained being, but even other two-brained, and even one-brained, beings such as fishes, birds, etc. (B:580).

What is of special interest to us, however, is how Gurdjieff describes the limitations of the old, “bright object” method:

“It cannot be denied that [...] it is possible to bring them into such a psychic state by making them fix their gaze on a brilliant or bright object, but [this does not work on] all beings there, not by a long way, the reason being that although from their fixed gaze on a shining object there may proceed in their general blood circulation the change of the ‘filling-of-the-blood-vessels,’ nevertheless the chief factor for this must be the, on their part, **intentional or automatic concentration of thought and feeling.**⁶

“And this latter can be obtained in them either from an **intense expectation**, or from that process proceeding in them which they express by the word ‘**faith**,’ or from the arising **emotion** of the sensation of **fear** of something

about to happen, or finally from the functions already contained within the presence of the given being which they call '**passions**,' as for instance '**hate**,' '**love**,' '**sensuality**,' '**curiosity**,' and so on and so forth.

"That is why in beings called there 'hysterical,' in whom there is lost temporarily or forever the possibility of **concentration of 'thought' and 'feeling**,' it is impossible by means of fixing their gaze upon a shining object to obtain in their blood circulation the change of the difference of the 'filling of-blood-vessels,' and hence it is also impossible to obtain in them this said hypnotic state." (B:580; emphases in bold added)

The above passages are of *singular significance* for this study. Here Gurdjieff lays out the basic conditions necessary for the arousal of the hypnotic state. These conditions are worth examining in summary and further detail:

- 1) Willingness of the subject to be subjected to an attraction;
- 2) Concentrated direction/distraction of attention toward an object as a result of emotional impulses such as: intense expectation, faith, fear, or passions (such as hate, love, sensuality, and curiosity);
- 3) *Sufficiently long and persistent*, intentional or automatic, concentration of *thought and feeling* on the object.

To explore the implications of the above for Gurdjieff's other "new means" of inducing the hypnotic trance, I turn to another fragment of the First Series, toward the end, where Beelzebub, having already expounded most of his tales, finds it necessary to tell his grandson about "the significance of the Form and Sequence Which He Chose for Expounding the Information Concerning Man" (B:1161-72).

Having told his tales throughout the First Series, at this point Beelzebub finds his grandson in an intensely emotional state, weeping and sobbing uncontrollably. Having calmed down after a "rather long time" (B:1161), Hasein reveals that his sadness is due to grief for the conditions of human life on Earth, depriving them of experiencing the real joys possible for them as harmonious beings. Indicating to Hasein that his pondering and crying are a sign that "during this time you did not inwardly sleep" (B:1163), Beelzebub then finds it opportune to let his grandson know why he chose the given particular form and sequence for telling his tales (B:1163).

The First Condition of Literary Hypnosis

First, Gurdjieff establishes the presence of the first condition for inducing a hypnotic state, that is, the condition of presence of a willing subject:

6. Note here Gurdjieff's reference to "thought and feeling" concentration on the part of the hypnotized as being a precondition for her or his successful hypnosis. Compare this with his objective in writing his First Series (see the epigraph to this chapter) to affect the "mentation and feelings" of the reader.

“When at the beginning of our journey I noticed that you were very interested in the three-brained beings of the planet Earth, I then decided, under the aspect of gratifying that interest of yours, to tell you everything about them in such a way so that there should be crystallized in you for your future being-association the required what are called ‘Egoplastikoori,’ without any admixture of doubt.” (B:1165)

By “Egoplastikoori,” Gurdjieff means psychic visualizations and picturings. Then, Gurdjieff explains in detail the significance of the difference between ‘reason of knowing’ and ‘reason of understanding.’ The former indicates the acquisition of knowledge, in a random manner, by the mental center alone; this knowledge is worthless for it is temporary, and soon evaporates from the organism with changes in external and surrounding circumstances. The latter form of knowledge acquisition, however, is essential for the development of “objective reason,” for it is acquired in a particular order by all the “brains” of being, and thereby becomes an “inseparable” (B:1166) part of being “essence,” and of the whole common presence:

“The conscious Reason-of-understanding, which in general it is proper for three-brained beings to have, is a ‘something’ which blends with their common presence, and therefore information of every kind perceived with this Reason becomes forever their inseparable part.” (B:1166)

In order to induce such a “Reason of understanding,” Gurdjieff tells Hasein, he had to pursue two interrelated principles: 1-to speak in the third person, through dialogues of characters, so that Beelzebub’s own opinions would not be automatically taken in by Hasein as his own, requiring him to ponder along the affirming/denying cycles of the dialogues constructed; and 2-the data is provided in such a “premeditated” (B:1166) order that Hasein would “be able to marshal [his] own subjective reasoning concerning all causes, **only on the basis of certain facts which I have told you**” (B:1165; bold added).

In other words, the dialogues are constructed in such a way that give the appearance of conflicting or even incomplete opinions, but they are merely aspects of Beelzebub’s own premeditated views presented in such a way that Hasein would *on his own* derive conclusions that had already been in a premeditated way intended and planned by Beelzebub. The dialogue form of Beelzebub’s tales allows the possibility of introducing various fragments of mental, emotional, and sensible information that directly targets in a premeditated way various centers of functioning of Hasein’s psyche. Although there is a semblance of initiative on the part of Hasein in using the “leather” supplied by Beelzebub in making shoes, the nature and the particular size and order of the pieces of the leather (i.e., information) supplied is such that it will result in the kinds of shoes Beelzebub intended to make.⁷

Beelzebub, after all, does not hide from Hasein how he learned such methods of “fixing” ideas in the common presence of others:

“Well then, my boy, in order that the mentioned Zernofookalnian-friction”⁸ should be obtained in beings, and that at the same time the crystallization of the new perceptions should proceed for the Reason-of-understanding, I—already knowing very well what are called the “laws-of-the-fixing-and-unfixing-of-ideas-in-localizations,” the details of which laws, to mention it, by the way, I learned also, thanks to the three-brained beings who have taken your fancy, during my sojourn among them as ‘professional hypnotist’—had in view during my tales, among many other necessary principles in respect of the current perception of new information through guidance from without, always to keep also to the same inevitable rule, so that the gradualness of the enlarging of, as is said, the ‘quintessence of the information’ should proceed in you with the entire absence of the being-impulses of ‘indignation, ‘offense,’ ‘vexation,’ and so forth.” (B:1169–70; bold added)

The expression used repeatedly in Beelzebub’s tales, as in the above passage, i.e., “the three-brained beings who have taken your fancy” should not be taken lightly as a figure of speech. It tells much about the intentions of Beelzebub in educating his grandson, and of Gurdjieff in influencing his reader. The fantastic panorama of cosmic mythology constructed in the First Series is a surface texture in which much of Gurdjieff’s teaching and the *practice* of that teaching through inducing hypnosis are concealed.

The result is that the reader, as represented by Hasein in the conversation with Beelzebub, has the impression that it is through his (or her) own willing and active mentation and feeling that the conversation and the “seeking after truth” proceeds, when the willing subject of the search has been in fact *conditioned* (through hypnotic “fixing-and-unfixing” of ideas) to believe that such action has been taken “willfully” and upon its “own initiative.” Now the “seeker after truth,” through employment of various “specialized techniques” of Plastikoori (psychic visualizations and picturings embedded in writing), thinks the search is one resulting from his/her own essence rather than artfully induced via the mechanism of literary hypnosis.

The Second Condition of Literary Hypnosis

Gurdjieff achieves the second condition of the “general hypnotic process” in his writing by creating an intense atmosphere of fantastic wonder, secrecy,

7. Gurdjieff was fond of saying to his pupils that he had very fine leather to sell, but only if they wanted to make their own shoes. However, at the same time, it is not possible to fabricate “American canaries” of all perfect colors from materials consisting of ordinary sparrows, a brush, and pre-selected fragments of paint. Gurdjieff sought remarkable followers with their own sense of initiative; but still he sought *followers*.

8. This is Gurdjieff’s word for the friction of affirming and denying ideas introduced through the dialogue of personages in his tales.

astonishment, and especially curiosity about his teaching and his life. It is this function of his hypnotic practice that more than any other emanating from his “extraordinary” life explains why he so intentionally concealed basic facts and information about his own life and teaching from his closest pupils. It is not surprising then, as Olga de Hartmann, one of his close pupils at the time, notes in her memoirs, to find Gurdjieff intentionally destroying his personal identification documents, birth certificates, and passports around the same time when his First Series and the early drafts of his Second Series had been composed (Hartmann and Hartmann 1992).

To guarantee a steady audience of willing readers and pupils, the intense emotional states of deep-seated curiosity, astonishment, love or hate (as a result of being stepped on one’s “corns”), intense expectations of novel ideas from “remote ancient times” written on “very old tablets,” senses of fear induced about not reading his disclaimed writings or not reading them in particular ways prescribed, etc., had the common effect of drawing the attention of more and more curious seekers to the enigmatic personality, and especially strange writings, of the “extraordinary” Gurdjieff.

The Third Condition of Literary Hypnosis

The third condition of the “general hypnotic process” created by Gurdjieff is served in his writings by the intense concentration of *mind and feelings* of the reader on the “shiny objects” of four equally complex books (or three series, if *Herald* is included in the Third Series), to be read thrice each, in a particular order that allows effective and rigorous psychological immersion and conditioning over many, many years of the reader in the ideas, personality, cosmology, ontology, and organizational frameworks and requirements of the spiritual movement ushered by Gurdjieff.

The intentional complexity of the text, fragmented into fine leather pieces of mental information, emotional episodes, and sensual anecdotes, woven into fantastic and non-verifiable surface tales of a new teaching, teacher, and school rooted in an “ancient tradition” indeed assures a lifetime of wonder and curiosity in the reader in search of the truth about this “extraordinary” teaching and “enigmatic” teacher.

Karnak: A Spaceship of Perpetual Hypnosis?

Gurdjieff may have discovered and practiced, as he claims, a “direct” way of inducing hypnotic states on any three-, two-, or one-brained being. Obviously, such a method could have been induced only in his own presence, that is, during his own lifetime. But such digressive comments on direct methods of inducing hypnotic states, like his digressive commentary about the use of hypnotism for viewing distant “cosmic centers,” should not divert our attention from observing the “new” means of hypnotic influence Gurdjieff pursued throughout his “technical specialization” as a writer.

For his teaching purpose, no two- or one-brained beings were necessary, nor was he interested in “hysterical” readers unable to focus their mental and emotional attention on his writings. Those with psychological troubles were not the target of his spiritual herald, as he repeatedly made clear to his pupils. He sought readers with sufficiently deep interest to endure long days and nights of intense concentration to decipher and blend the fragments of data about his teaching, life, and school—and to be able to do so on their own initiatives. For this reason, he was not, and the spiritual tradition he ushered has not been, actively proselytizing. After all, only those who “seek” would be the best willing candidates subjected to the rigors of his teaching.

By making the terminological, stylistic, and substantive architecture of his writings as difficult and enigmatic as possible, he made sure he was relating to those remarkable men and women who had the “material required” for the continuation of his legacy. But most of all, for the perpetuation of such a teaching tradition, it was no longer necessary for him to be physically present. “All and everything” for the continuation of his legacy in his posterity had already been masterfully crystallized in the architecture of his writings. *All & Everything* is itself the perpetually hypnotizing spaceship Karnak, released into the interstellar space of mystical traditions, everlastingly propelled by the powers of attraction and repulsion emanating from the magnetic gravity of the dedicated readers’ attentions forever fueling the *personally and socially constructed* “enigma” of Gurdjieff’s teaching and life.

Gurdjieff himself admitted to having been deeply immersed in the science and practice of hypnotism. He admitted to having been a “professional hypnotist” during a crucial period of his life. He confessed to having misused such skills for personal desires during that period, and that he took an oath not to repeat it. He recognized the legitimacy of using, and his right to use, hypnotism for “scientific purposes.” He acknowledged using it on theosophists and others as his “guinea pigs.” He admitted experimenting on his pupils in the Institute, during twenty-one “artificial” years of his life, as objects of his “scientific observations and investigations.” And he conceded having, unintentionally, exerted hypnotic influence on his pupils, and sought ways to neutralize such “undesirable” influences on his part. These Gurdjieff himself explicitly admitted.

What this study proposes in addition to the above, however, is that Gurdjieff also left sufficient clues in his own writings that his *writings themselves* were consciously, intentionally, and systematically intended to *continue* his interest in, research on, and practice of, hypnotism. Gurdjieff did not stop developing and practicing his hypnotic skills beyond his “professional-hypnotist” sojourns; he in fact never stopped being a “professional hypnotist” throughout his mature life. He instead sought to further develop and creatively practice this, his “technical specialization.”

Conclusion **GURDJIEFF'S ROUNDABOUT YEZIDI CIRCLE**

“And in doing this, they criticize exactly that humble and honest learned being of their planet [Mesmer], who, if he had not been pecked to death would have revived that science, which alone is absolutely necessary to them and by means of which alone, perhaps, they might be saved from the consequences of the properties of the organ Kundabuffer.”
—B:562

In a passage from P. D. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*, Gurdjieff reportedly distinguishes “black magic” from “white magic” by one prominent feature, that the black magic (which he regards as possibly being altruistic, like white magic) has a tendency to “use people for some, even best of aims, *without their knowledge and understanding*” (1949:227).

Did Gurdjieff's “scientific” use of hypnotism in pursuit of his teaching, legacy, and cosmic ends amount to an exercise in black magic? Did the author of *Beelzebub* intend, by writing his “Ten Books in Three Series,” to draw a Yezidi circle of hypnotic spell (of his life and legacy) around the unsuspecting readers who enter, and not let them go?

The passage epigraphed above tells of the significance Gurdjieff attached to hypnotism in relation to the cause of harmonious human development. He repeatedly emphasized

that it is only and only through a practical knowledge of the science of hypnotism that humanity has any chance of recovering from consequences of the “organ Kundabuffer.” This explains why he spent almost a lifetime in learning about this science, experimenting with it as “professional hypnotist,” and writing much *about* his background interest and “technical specialization” here and there in his own writings.

But, highlighting the significance of hypnosis for human salvation and reporting on his interest and skills in his writings are one thing, and actually practicing it in his teaching and through his writings is another. The major paradox of Gurdjieff's life and teaching, as revealed through the foregoing hermeneutic analysis of his text, has been that while he convincingly hoisted the significance of the conscious/subconscious split in the human mind and the resulting problem of human hypnotizability to the apex of the overall challenges facing humanity in the search for harmonious living, as an accomplished hypnotist in pursuit of his life and teaching objectives he actually used the “technical specialization” of hypnotism as a central feature of his teaching and particularly writings treated as “scientific” pursuits.

I have argued that his career as a professional hypnotist was not simply a passing episode in his early life; rather, it was his most central, continuing, and deepening “scientific” interest and pursuit throughout his lifetime. None of his explicit remarks about his vows not to use hypnotism for “personal” gains can be interpreted to mean that he intended not to use hypnotism in his teaching and among his pupils to pursue his “scientific” aims. Gurdjieff consistently saw and characterized his teaching as an experiment in “objective” science. A careful and independent textual analysis of not only what Gurdjieff *said* but also what he actually *did* in all his writings demonstrates the extent to which he pursued his writing as a novel experiment in literary hypnotism.

Why did Gurdjieff, in pursuit of awakening humanity from the hypnotic trance and prison of mechanical life, consciously, intentionally, and systematically subject his pupils and readers to the Yezidi circle of his hypnotic influence, especially through his writings? And why did he leave, widely in the texture of his writings, more or less explicit information regarding his knowledge and practice of hypnotism such that they could aid those subjected to his hypnotic spell to get out of his Yezidi circle?

Gurdjieff's scattering and/or apparent withholding of information about his life and teaching were not merely due to a concern for pedagogical correctness but elaborate and systematic efforts to raise and spread deep and obsessive curiosities among his readers and followers about his life and teaching. Fragmenting information about his life and teaching provided the most fertile emotional conditions for effecting and spreading—during his lifetime *and* into his posterity—the hypnotic influence of his life and teaching in his readers' subconscious minds. It assured never-ending

“searches after the truth” of his life and teaching and continual, lifelong and world-wide, gazes of generations of interested readers on the shiny pages of his thrice-to-be-read “Ten Books in Three Series.” For the “crystallisation and decrystallisation of those psychic factors” that he intended to engender, after all, “a comparatively lengthy period” was necessary (H:82). Whether he was actually successful in his novel experimentations with literary hypnotism is an important question to explore on its own merit, but this issue must be distinguished from the demonstrable facts of his intentions to pursue the science of hypnotism as a singular aim of his life and teaching.

Gurdjieff himself claimed in *Herald*, as substantiated in the foregoing study, that not only during the period prior to the establishment of his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, but also following it during a twenty-one year period of “artificial life” that he had imposed on himself (ca. 1911–1932), he practiced hypnotism on his pupils *without their knowledge*. He goes out of his way in *Herald* to also altruistically insist that his “scientific” observations and experimentations as such were meant for the good of those subjected to his hypnotism and of humanity at large. In this sense, strictly speaking, Gurdjieff’s teaching practice *during the aforementioned periods of his life* would be of the “black magical” variety, based on the definition he himself offers via Ouspensky (1949:227).

However, it is also indubitable that Gurdjieff went out of his way in *Herald*, explicitly and clearly, to confess and acknowledge to the facts of such uses of hypnosis in his teaching. Besides, in his three series of writings, Gurdjieff left, easily accessible or not, ample and significant information and clues about his lifelong interest in and practice of hypnotism *as part of his teaching*. As the foregoing study has shown, it is simply impossible to deny that Gurdjieff made clear, despite his mythical, cryptic and at times convoluted language in his writing, that he used his writings as an hypnotic conduit for the transmission of his teaching and life’s story to his posterity.

Therefore, to be fair to Gurdjieff—who did not actually hide and in fact left ample information in his writings regarding his interest and pursuit of hypnotism throughout his career—I think he would not fit his own definition of a “black magician” when considering his life’s legacy and writings as a whole. He simply left a wide array of information about the central place of hypnosis in his life and teaching, including his career as a writer, to safeguard his legacy from the accusation of being that of a black magician according to the strict definition he himself offers for it in the words of Ouspensky. “All and everything” about his views on and practice of hypnotism have been deposited forever in the body of his own writings, sometimes directly and matter-of-factly stated, and at times fragmented and concealed within numerous tales of all sorts.

However, the question remains as to why did Gurdjieff do that? Why did he try to hypnotize his readers and pupils into learning about what it is and

how it works, in order to awaken them from the sleep, mechanicalness, and prison of everyday life? Why not adopt another method and way of educating them involving a more straightforward way of addressing their thinking center and “rational mind,” and letting them “know” what hypnosis is, how humans are hypnotized, and how they can be awakened?

I think Gurdjieff's response would be that it is not sufficient just to “know” what hypnotism is and how it works in order to rid humanity from the negative consequences of the “organ Kundabuffer”; one must *understand* it, and this requires the attention of more than one epistemic center in the human organism. It requires experiential learning using all centers since, ultimately, to wake-up requires achieving an “all-centers-awake” state.

In other words, judging from the depth and complexity of what he tried to convey through his writings about the so-called “organ Kundabuffer” and its consequences, it is not difficult to see why Gurdjieff would pursue such a twofold strategy of hypnotizing his readers while also telling them he is doing so and how. In his view, a practical knowledge about the nature of human subconsciousness is absolutely necessary to free oneself from prevalent types of hypnotic influence. However, this does not mean that one may not, at the same time, fall under the influence of other kinds of hypnotic conditioning while pursuing the task of “awakening” oneself. Gurdjieff confronted a cosmically inherited, disharmonized organic life on Earth characterized by human mechanicalness, sleep, imprisonment, and inner slavery. In his view, humanity *is already* under the hypnotic influence of ordinary life in the first place. It is not a question of hypnotizing awakened human beings, but that of confronting a humanity deeply ingrained *already* in the trance of life. To escape, Gurdjieff said, one must first realize that one is in prison. But how best can such a shocking realization be achieved amid a hypnotic state of mind?

To address only the thinking center in educating an already hypnotized humanity would be futile in Gurdjieff's view, since the whole organism is already conditioned by forces that resist such awakening. To awaken the whole organism, not just the thinking but also the feeling centers of the human organism as well as its everyday sensibilities about himself or herself and the world lived should be simultaneously targeted. Besides, for Gurdjieff, humanity cannot be liberated from one influence without the danger of falling under another influence. For him it is a question of how to splash from the flow of the river of the mechanical Life into the flow of the river of “Work” on oneself in pursuit of conscious and intentional self-perfection to serve cosmic purposes. It is a question of freeing oneself from subjugation to the mechanical laws of Earthly life in order to fall under the cosmic and divine laws originating in the Sun Absolute.

Therefore, while Gurdjieff's hypnotic writings on the surface claim to aim at helping humanity to be liberated from *all* hypnotic influences

“whatsoever,” he ends up paradoxically resorting to the hypnotic influence of his life and teaching to accomplish his goals. Gurdjieff reportedly once used an analogy, as quoted by Ouspensky (1949:219), of an accomplished shepherd who, in safeguarding his flock’s lives from dangers of the wild, hypnotized his sheep to believe that they are not only becoming free from the constant influence of the shepherd, but that they are lions, eagles, men or even magicians—in other words, they are their own shepherds (“masters”) and in fact shepherds of other sheep. Did Gurdjieff’s hypnotic writings similarly aim at the attraction, conditioning, and spreading, of such “remarkable people” in the service of spreading the legacy of his life and teaching? Did he seek such ends by spreading his hypnotic influence to genuinely help others free themselves from *all* kinds of hypnotic influence, or did his teaching aim, like the shepherd in the story, to only make others *think* that they are free?

Gurdjieff tells his readers at the end of his First Series that he hoped to install a new organ, like the “organ Kundabuffer,” but this time of an opposite nature, that would make humans perpetually mindful and present to the reality of their inevitable death. If the “organ Kundabuffer” had caused humans to forget their evolutionary purpose, and to become instead identified with the transitory possessions and pleasures of this-worldly life, Gurdjieff sought to hypnotize humanity back to a “real” cosmic awareness of the transiency of this-worldly life, and install such an “automatic” organ in them that would constantly remind them of their evolutionary ends. All and everything Gurdjieff pursued in his writings was an effort in installing this, what he considers to be an alternative organ, of *perpetual and automatic awakening* in the human organisms of his readers. This organ is supposed to not only educate his readers about what the hypnotic trance of life is, but also show them how it works, and how they can use the knowledge of the nature and methods learned to awaken themselves from their existential sleep to the real meaning and purpose of their lives.

It is here that one can begin to see the limits of Gurdjieff’s teaching, in regard both to “Work” and to “Life,” while appreciating his intentions and how one can use an awareness of such a knowledge to overcome the limits.

The problem with the remedy offered by Gurdjieff through his teaching and particularly via his writings—that is, of installing an automatic organ of awakening in the organism from without through the teacher’s hypnotic influence—is that in this pursuit also, as in the case of the “organ Kundabuffer” and its consequences, the *externally* induced modality of hypnotic influence still prevails, and “maleficent consequences” resulting from such automatic conditioning or “liberation” can potentially continue to enslave the interested to the “abnormal conditions of life they themselves have established on Earth”—both outside and inside the “school.”

Ironically, in his more explicit mythological discourses in the First Series, Gurdjieff himself is the most outspoken critique of the externally induced

hypnotic method for liberating humanity albeit in its angelic applications. He does not even spare archangels from the sharp edges of his “stepping on corns” teaching techniques when he criticizes how they used the “organ Kundabuffer” to save humanity from self-extinction. Gurdjieff’s argument is that given the deteriorating “falling” tendency built into the Law of Seven, it would only be a matter of time until the workings of the Law turned the originally good intentions into evil ones. In the absence of an all-round self-knowledge and “self-mastery” over *all forms* of hypnotic influence, *including that exerted by the well-intentioned “archangel” or teacher*, the subconscious mind remains only an automated process devoid of flexibility to respond to the ever changing conditions of teaching and life.

The only way the “spaceship” of human organism can find its right path in the darkness of subconscious interstellar space, to use Gurdjieff’s mythological analogy, in other words, is by enabling the individual to exert *its own conscious and intentional awakening shocks* to its organism at appropriate spatiotemporal coordinates. Gurdjieff’s own hypnotic knowledge and influence from without *cannot substitute* for the knowledge and skills required on the part of the reader and the pupil to do the same in regard to his or her own organism. The practice of hypnosis by an “other” cannot substitute for the knowledge and the ability to consciously and intentionally practice *self-hypnosis on one’s own*. Otherwise, the previous jolts exerted by an external teacher who will sooner or later also vanish into the oblivion of interstellar space will continue forever, moving the pupil in predetermined and rigid, automatic, and mechanical paths and journeys while realities of “school” and world-historically constituted life conditions continue to move in zig-zag and unpredictable directions. This would render the pupil believing that he/she is on the “only right” path as revealed by the teacher, while in reality he or she may remain as much hypnotized in the river of “Work” as any other human drop in the river of ordinary “Life.”

The danger of spiritual awakening based on automatic and mechanical dependence on a teacher or a teaching exerting hypnotic influence from without is that what may have been positive aspects of a teaching may turn out to become, given the rigidified nature of influences imprinted on the subconscious mind, the opposite of what they originally intended to be. The hypnotic influence exposes the seeker not only to the positive aspects of life and ideas of the teacher, but also to their possible negative aspects. And no matter how perfect a teacher may have been or become, he or she can never be God in Gurdjieff’s Megalocosmos. After all, even Gurdjieff’s archangels, including the multi-horned Beelzebub himself, made mistakes. Even Gurdjieff’s God did not realize that His place of residence, the Absolute Sun, was shrinking due to the passage of time.

For instance, exploring the deeper subtext of Gurdjieff’s life and teaching may reveal possible subconscious identifications on his own part with the

systems and styles of teaching prevalent in the schools he visited. The particular conciliatory attitude toward the existing, alienating structures of social "Work" and "Life" may themselves be regarded as subconscious pedagogical and lifestyle structures internalized by Gurdjieff in the course of his travels in the East. Sociologically speaking, nowhere is the self-defeating nature of Gurdjieff's strategy of harmonious development in specific regard to broader social transformation more apparent than in his dualistic attitude toward the separately flowing rivers of "Work" and "Life."

Here, we have a teaching whose program for the harmonious self-development of a select number of human beings in the Work is not only carried out in the midst, but also in fact made possible and feeds off the continuing disharmonious, habituated, anesthetized, and mechanical conditions of hypnotic sleep, of everyday life as a whole. The search for the "secret school" is made at the expense of devil's-back-riding and forging painted sparrows for "American Canaries." The habituated and habituating forces emanating from a perpetually existing imperfect social life, accompanied by a constant fresh supply of new pupils in the ever reorganized "school" contexts, feed the seeker/teacher with the very physical, emotional, and intellectual nutrients in struggle against which (through exertion of conscious and intentional "shocks" and suffering to one's organism) he or she can maintain her or his wakefulness. The individual seeker and the "school" collective in which he or she "works" are thus perpetually subjected in their lifetime to two internalized energies or forces: (1) a fettering energy from outside that can only be overcome through shocks by (2) another energy consciously and intentionally generated by the seeker, causing a perpetual struggle in her or his being.

"Life" then is also treated as a "Yezidi circle" within which the seeker necessarily remains in a state of hypnotic sleep unless he or she constantly keeps her/himself awake (in cooperation with her or his teacher and work companions) through continual efforts at "conscious labor and intentional suffering." The "harmonious development of man" in the "Work" and the disharmonious development of man in "Life" thus become mutually dependent upon and feed one another. This actually parallels after all, according to Gurdjieff's cosmology, why God created the Devil in the first place and assigned him the task of keeping Himself awake as His own alter ego. Paradoxically, this also explained to Gurdjieff at the height of his self-discoveries why he had to endure the continuing struggle of the good and evil energies within himself, especially in the sexual/carnal realms, that provided him with the key he needed to unlock the mystery of how he could remember his master self in order to keep himself awake (and thus in the "Work") in the midst of Life.

However, Gurdjieff's theory of the Devil as God's alter-ego does not consistently match his own portrayal of Beelzebub as actually a

compassionate being, on the one hand, and his theoretical refutation of the objective reality of the dualism of good and evil, on the other. His notions that there is no "objective" evil, that the evil is the invention of human mind and conduct, and that the alienated conditions of human life are results of actions of "they themselves," do not translate into the practical recognition of the transient and artificial nature of his constructed and perpetuated dualism in the "two river" analogy. Gurdjieff's theory thus echoes and justifies, in a rather much more dramatic and explicit way, the common religious belief that "this-worldly" life on Earth is essentially a life of suffering, and as such merely a testing ground in the struggle against which the human soul is purified and/or created for divine and sacred purposes. In so doing, by simultaneously "harmonizing" the so-called "esoteric" faction of humanity while assigning all others to perpetual disharmony as the inevitable condition of exoteric humanity, the teaching only circulates disharmony across persons and generations. It does not solve it.¹

The fact that suffering, in terms of the experience of new challenges and shocks to the habituated and ordinary patterns of life, plays a part in human evolution does not necessarily mean that *particular historical forms* of suffering, including those in social life, may not be transcendable. For instance, Gurdjieff does not abandon the "automobile" for the inconveniences of pedestrian mobility and the amount of "suffering" it may supply for his "Work." He instead cherishes and welcomes it, but seeks new forms of "suffering" for his terrified passengers. Likewise, the fact that human exploitation, domination, and repression have existed historically, does not mean that they are not transcendable—fearing that there would be no more supplies of "suffering" in relation to which individuals can evolve. The confusion of the *absolute* and the *relative* degrees and forms of suffering is an important source of contradiction in Gurdjieff's dualistic doctrine of Work and Life. The resulting major inconsistency in Gurdjieff's thinking about the meaning of life in general and the perpetual maintenance of the dualism of Life and Work in Gurdjieff's "fourth way" teaching, itself contradicts the creative dynamics of the Law of Three as described by Gurdjieff himself which suggests that any dualism of opposite forces is reconcilable with the participation of a third conscious and intentional

1. Fritz Peters, in his recollections of Gurdjieff's talks with him as a small boy in his Institute in France, writes: "He nodded. 'Perhaps only one, perhaps not even one. Must learn from Nature. Man is also organism. Nature make many acorns, but possibility to become tree exist for only few acorns. Same with man—many men born, but only few grow. People think this waste, think Nature waste. Not so. Rest become fertilizer, go back into earth and create possibility for more acorns, more men, once in while more tree—more real man. Nature always give—but only give possibility. To become real oak, or real man, must make effort. You understand this, my work, this Institute, not for fertilizer. For real man, only. But must also understand fertilizer necessary to Nature. Possibility for real tree, real man also depend just this fertilizer'" (Peters 1964:42).

creative force. The perpetual maintenance of the dualism of Life and Work rivers is in fact best exemplified by the conflicting tensions between Gurdjieff's personality and teaching as noted by Ouspensky (1949:373–74).

Moreover, one should note that Gurdjieff's "fourth way" does not really take place amid everyday life. The teaching is still dualistically kept apart from "life"²; only the mechanism of this separation has changed. Utilization of cryptic languages and secretive means of communication with pupils seems to have simply replaced the earlier forms based on actual physical separations from the everyday current of social life. Instead of caves, forests, and monasteries, we have a system of linguistic and symbolic camouflage and fragmented pedagogy that assures the survivability and activity of the "fourth way" school amid, but apart from, life. Such a *symbolic retreat* from life not only perpetuates the exclusionist tendencies in this path, it also deprives the rest of humanity from critically sharing in, and further developing, the valuable contributions of Gurdjieff's teaching on the "three-brained" nature of human organism and the resulting divided nature of human selfhood and inner landscape. Paradoxically, therefore, a full understanding, appreciation, and practice of Gurdjieff's pedagogy requires liberating oneself from the Yezidi circle of Gurdjieff's teaching itself in regard to its attitudes toward *both rivers* of "Work" and "Life."

In his First Series chapter on hypnotism, Gurdjieff, via Beelzebub, recognizes the science of hypnotism as the sole means by which humanity might be saved from the "organ Kundabuffer," and laments the abnormal conditions of ordinary being existence, factionalism, and divisiveness that prevented Mesmer's revival of that science and continues to prevent "what is called the sacred 'Antkooano,' upon which, among other things, the Very Saintly Ashiata Shiemash also counted":

"The Sacred Antkooano is the name of that process of perfecting the Objective-Reason in the three-centered beings, which process proceeds by itself simply from the 'flow of time.'

"As a rule, everywhere on those planets of our Great Universe upon which three-brained beings breed, the perfecting of Objective-Reason can proceed in them only from personal conscious labours and intentional sufferings.

"This sacred Antkooano can proceed only on those planets upon which in general all cosmic truths have become known to all the beings.

"And all cosmic truths usually become known to all on these planets, thanks to the fact that the beings of the given planet who by their conscious labours

2. J. Walter Driscoll adds here that, "... there are poignant examples recorded of Gurdjieff's kindness, sharing, and charity to his followers, family and the needy public (Tchekhovitch 2006:198–200) but groups institutionalized under his name are not known to engage in charity, social activism or humanitarian action."

learn some truths or other share it with other beings of their planet, and in this way all the cosmic truths gradually become known by all the beings of the given planet without any distinction.”³ (B:563)

My purpose in this study has not been to judge whether and how Gurdjieff was actually successful in achieving the goals for which he devised and implemented his “new means” of literary hypnotism. The issue of what Gurdjieff intended to do, and whether he succeeded in it, are two different matters. There can be no a priori judgment made regarding whether this or that pupil, follower, or reader of Gurdjieff was truly mesmerized by his “enigmatic” life or teaching, or that such an experience was transcended in any given personal experience. This is something each and everyone of those exposed to his legacy, this author included, have to reckon with on their own. My purpose in this study has been, rather, to demonstrate that Gurdjieff consciously, intentionally, and systematically pursued a lifelong project of hypnotic experimentation and practice in his teaching, and that he purposely intended his hypnotic influence to continue into his posterity through the medium of his own writings. This implanting of his own alternative organ (in contrast to that of the organ Kundabuffer) in the “bodies” of his writings and readers assured for him at least the “automatic” perpetuation of his legacy; yet, evidently, based on what he deposited in his own writings, he also expected, aspired and wished for much more in the lives of his future generations still intensely listening to his tales.

While it is worth reminding again that without awakening to the hypnotic influence of Gurdjieff’s own writings and legacy, and escaping the Yezidi circle of his own purposefully cast trance, it is impossible to develop a critical appreciation of the shortcomings as well as the contributions of his teaching, life, and the new spiritual movement he ushered, yet, it is also important to note that Gurdjieff did not simply draw the Yezidi circle of his teaching around his readers; he also erased parts of it, by repeatedly exerting external shocks to those around him to take their own initiative. The auto “accident”⁴ that ushered his writing career also created a distance between Gurdjieff and pupils he wanted to draw away. The *Herald* included much “shocking” new facts, said right to the face of his readers, of what his

3. I appreciate J. Walter Driscoll for bringing to my attention this important voice in Gurdjieff. Driscoll, footnoting his commentary, continues to ironically note that while the above quoted passages from the First Series contain two references to “sharing,” the citation does not appear even once in either editions of *Guide and Index to G. I. Gurdjieff's All and Everything, Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (1971, 2003).

4. It is interesting to note here that in his talk in New York City later titled “The Material Question” Gurdjieff provides an account of a near auto accident he had *before* leaving for the United States that strikingly resembles the “serious” auto accident he had upon his return from America in 1924. Could this have been the episode that gave him the idea of staging a “real” accident to usher the conditions for launching his writing career? It is also noteworthy that he was involved in another auto accident in 1948.

background and practices as a “professional hypnotist” had been. The allegedly “incomplete” Third Series could not have helped but shock his pupils about what the teacher had promised but did not pass on to them, meaning they had to take their own initiatives. Even the accomplished editor A. R. Orage could not help express bewilderment about what the First Series, which he meticulously helped edit, was about while recognizing its worth.⁵

Gurdjieff did seek to spread his hypnotic influence through his writings, but he also continually exerted discontinuities and shocks in it to remind his readers and pupils not to forget their own individual initiatives. Gurdjieff did this by also implanting “all and everything” that is needed for those attracted to him in order to “decrystallize,” through their own conscious labors and intentional sufferings, the automatic “crystallizations” Gurdjieff sought after through his writings. Gurdjieff apparently believed this was the most effective way for him to teach his readers to gain a *practical understanding* of and “technical specialization” in the “science” he considered to be *absolutely* needed to awaken themselves from the sleep of everyday life, as noted in the epigraph to this Chapter (see also B:562).

Gurdjieff’s “Ten Books in Three Series” was, and for his readers still is, an enneagramatic journey involving *crystallization* and then *decrystallization* of hypnotic “psychic factors” in his readers (see Figure C.1). With one hand he hypnotizes them, with another he provides them with the necessary knowledges and methods regarding how to free themselves from his and any hypnotic influence. The extent of liberation from such influence, in other words, also depends on the readers’ *own* individual initiative, on their *own* conscious labors and intentional sufferings. From his vantage point, some who become exposed may remain automatically infatuated with his life and teaching and perpetually remain in the same river banks of Work, not realizing the extent and depth of the influence they were subjected to. Others may become conscious of Gurdjieff’s hypnotic influence but continue to remain satisfied as such. Others perhaps take a step further and question such influence and endure the intentional sufferings that may ensue from realizing the terror of their situation and seek a way out. Some may then “run away as fast as [the boy] could” from the circle (even though they may still remain under his influence) and yet others may find it possible to drive in and out of the roundabout Yezidi circle and Gurdjieff’s influence at will, remaining critically appreciative of his legacy while

5. “Ten million people may say the book [*All and Everything*] is nonsense; but I shall still say, because I cannot do otherwise, that it is the profoundest, most illuminating book that I have ever seen or can imagine. My only disgust with it, in fact, is not that nobody can understand it, but that I cannot; and I get so angry and desperate about it, just because I fail to grasp it, and G seems quite maliciously to have made it not difficult but impossible to understand.” (Orage, quoted in Taylor 1998:131).

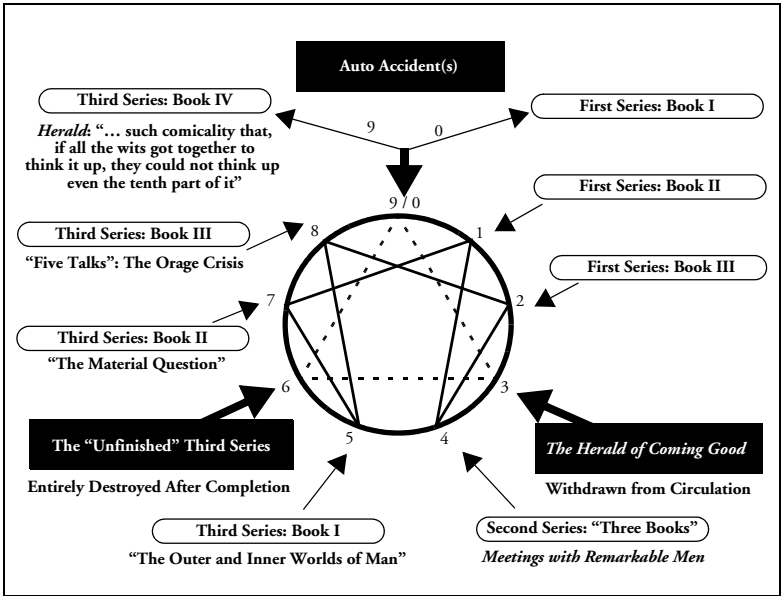


Figure C.1 The Enneagram of Crystallization and Decrystallization of the Hypnotic “Psychic Factor” through the Three Series as a Whole

contributing to its development. The enneagram of such inner liberatory efforts therefore may evolve, beyond the automatic, conscious, or intentional shocks of subordination to Gurdjieff’s teaching, to states of inner freedom that could alone allow one to skillfully manage the wolf, the sheep, and the cabbage trusted to one’s care.

The reader’s ambivalence toward Gurdjieff’s legacy is, therefore, not incidental, but goes to the heart of the identity of opposites inherent in the substance and method of his teaching—a contradiction that afflicted Gurdjieff’s own life and personality as well. To be faithful to his teaching, one cannot readily love and hate Gurdjieff as a whole, because he was also afflicted with legions of selves, some high and some low in character. For this very reason, it is possible to appreciate and cherish the teachings of one Gurdjieff self, while being critical and uncompromising toward another self in Gurdjieff. Gurdjieff was himself, after all, a perpetual landscape for the “struggle of (white and black) magicians.” He enigmatized people but invited them to be critical of him and his teaching as well. He attracted pupils, yet stepped on their corns. On the one hand, as noted in his Third Series, his ability to receive homage from even his worst enemies may be taken as a sign of his hypnotic skills. On the other hand, sending pupils away on purpose while worriedly seeing their pale faces may have also been

an effort (as he also noted this in *Herald*) to maintain distance between himself and his pupils given the hypnotic power of his personality.

Gurdjieff's 1914 scenario of the ballet *Struggle of the Magicians* was not only that of his own life, but also one whose lesson can guide the those exposed to his teaching. The scenario narrates the story of how Gafar, a Parsi prince, solicits the services of a Black Magician in his desperate efforts to attract the attention and love of Zeinab, a "devoted" pupil of a White Magician. In the struggle that ensues, the White Magician counters the hypnotic spell of the Black Magician thrown at Zeinab, awakening her and Gafar *both* while reminding them that they should *at all times* remember their own higher selves responsible for conscious and intentional action:

"Lord Creator, and all you His assistants, help us to be able to remember ourselves at all times in order that we may avoid involuntary actions, as only through them can evil manifest itself." (1957:43)

Similarly, through his father's advice and in his aphorisms, Gurdjieff sent clear messages regarding how he himself preferred to approach religious teachings and teachers of all kinds, an attitude whose "soundness and good quality" he seemed to offer to others for emulation on many occasions:

To be outwardly courteous to all without distinction, whether they be rich or poor, friends or enemies, power-possessors or slaves, and to whatever religion they may belong, but inwardly to remain free and never to put much trust in anyone or anything. (M:39)

"If you have not a critical mind, your visit here is useless." (Gurdjieff 1984:275)

When questioning what went right or wrong with Gurdjieff's life, teaching, and legacy, and whether they were due to his personality in everyday life or to his teaching (or both), therefore, one should also consider that the answer may also lie at least partly on the nature and quality of the "third" reconciling forces of individual initiatives on the part of those exposed to his legacy. Gurdjieff's White Magician in his ballet scenario reminds us that avoiding involuntary actions should be pursued "*at all times*," and that should necessarily include our times spent *both* in the "Life" as well as the "Work" rivers—no matter which brook or branch of the river of Work one may be attracted to or flowing in.

The recognition of the hypnotic agenda built into Gurdjieff's life and teaching does not necessarily diminish the value of his philosophy, theory, and practice of personal self-knowledge and harmonious human development. On the contrary, it helps us to pull away the mystical veil from his life's work in order to grasp the rational "gist" of his contributions to human enlightenment and awakening from the world-historically constituted hypnotic trances of our everyday *lives* and spiritual *works*.

Appendix **TEXTUAL CHRONOLOGY OF GURDJIEFF'S LIFE**

The Preparatory Period (1872?–1888)

Date/Place	Age	Event
1804–1828 Caucasus		[Russo-Persian wars. Georgia and (parts of) Armenia and Azerbaijan, having previously been parts of “Persia,” are annexed to Russia.]
1834 Asia Minor?		Gurdjieff's (G.'s) father is born (M:45), youngest son (M:41) of his family.
1837/1840 Gyumri		A new fortress is built (1837) and an adjacent new garrison town called Alexandropol is founded (1840) by Russians near the old town of Gyumri, located in western Armenia. [Gyumri was later renamed Alexandropol, and still later, in 1924, Leninakan; since 1990, after the devastating earthquake of 1988 and following the fall of the Soviet Union and gaining of independence by Armenia, the name was changed back to Gyumri]. G. spells the name of the town as Gumri (M:40).
1840?–1853? Caucasus		G.'s father's family moves and settles in the eastern shores of the Black Sea, in the environs of the town then called Gumush Khaneh (M:40). Father's age: 6?–19?
Georgia		“Not long before the last big Russo-Turkish War” (M:40) G.'s father's family moves to and settle in Georgia (Tiflis?) (M:40).
1853–1856 Caucasus		The Crimean War, or as G. would say later “the last big Russo-Turkish war” (M:40): British, French, and later Sardinia-Piedmont, armies support the Ottomans against Russia.

- 1872
Georgia 0 (Tiflis) George I. Gurdjieff is born first child on Jan 13 (old style). Father is 38 years old. Father from Greek ancestry, widely known as an amateur Ashokh (bard); mother is Armenian. G.'s birthplace cannot be Alexandropol, based on his own account (see date 1879). It is most likely Tiflis, in Georgia (origins of the surname "Gurdjieff"?).
- Georgia (Tiflis?) 6m G.'s name day, April 23 (old style), May 6 (new style); he is 6 months young.
- 1877
Caucasus 5 Declaration of war by Russia on the Ottomans. Town of Kars is annexed to Russia.
- Alexandropol 5 Name of town "Gyumri" is changed to Alexandropol (M:40).
- Alexandropol 5 Shortly after the name change, G.'s family move to Alexandropol (M:40), settling first in its Greek quarters (M:66).
- 1878/1879
Caucasus 7 "A year or two after he [G.'s father] had moved to Armenia" (M:40) cattle plague strikes the region; in a matter of few months almost all of G.'s father's cattle (those belonging to him and those of others under his care) are wiped out (M:40). At this time, the Gurdjieff household consists of G.'s parents, paternal grandmother, G., and his brother and sister. G. explicitly states that his age at this time is seven years old (M:41).
- 1880
Alexandropol/
Kars 8 G.'s grandmother dies. She instructs him on her death-bed to either be a common man, or do in his life not as other do (B:27). The latter becomes an *idea fixe* of G., when it becomes fused into his whole being as a result of other experiences of growing up (B:27–28).
G.'s later account of death of his grandmother, who had chosen to end her days with his youngest son (G.'s father) indicates that G. at this age is still a "chubby mite" clinging to her mother's skirt and still undeveloped in thoughts (B:27–28). This reinforces the belief that G.'s grandmother's death took place about this age. G. begins making friends with people much older than himself (M:66). "Half a century" later (1930) G. will trace the beginnings of his "searches" even to this date (L:77), perhaps in reference to his grandmother's death and advice.
- 1883
Alexandropol 11 G.'s father's second attempt at career (lumber/carpentry workshop) fails. He begins moving his carpentry workshop and (soon later) family to Kars (M:41). By this time G.'s all three younger sisters have been born (M:41).
- 1884
Kars 12 G.'s family resides in Kars. His father has a carpentry workshop.
12 G. is first sent to the Greek school, but later transferred to the Russian school (M:42). G. joins the church choir and his good voice attracts the attention of Dean Borsh of the Kars Military Cathedral, then already seventy years old (M:51).
12 As a result of a meeting to help G. recover from an eye infection, Dean Borsh befriends G.'s father. The Dean becomes G.'s first tutor. G. refers to him variously as either "a factor for the secondary stratum of my present individuality" (M:50), or "the founder and creator of my present individuality, and, so to say, the 'third aspect of my inner God.'" (M:34). G. later indicates his preference in education at the time was neither in science (medicine), nor religion, but in "technical specialization" (M:53).
12 G. suggests that at this age he is still "a capable boy," (M:52). Dean Borsh finds it necessary to begin educating G. about sexuality. He warns him of not giving in to sexual desires until responsible age (M:54–57). G. later declares "I don't know whether I have justified or am justifying your dreams, but the commandments you gave me I have never once in all my life broken" (M:57).
- 1886
Kars 14 Death of G.'s "favourite sister" (M:60)—being perhaps the same as the "intimate friend" (H:14) G. refers to later. G.'s grief over this, from which he

- does not recover for some time, leads to his becoming obsessive about finding out the purpose of human life on Earth (H:14). This is the beginning period of transition of G. from preparatory to responsible life (H:14). G.'s individuality, formed by his father and his tutor, Dean Borsh, leads him to question the automatic ways in which people explain away and dismiss the significance of such spiritual matters, and he becomes increasingly inclined and obsessive to find out rational explanations for them (H:14).
- 14 G. begins inquiries about soul and immortality from older people he met, beginning with his father (M:42).
- 14 G. reports that the first time he heard "about these [spiritual] matters" (M:60) was when he began at the time to be tutored by the young priest Bogachevsky, appointed by Dean Borsh to tutor him.
- 14 G. participates in a "table-turning" spiritual experiment with Bogachevsky and his friends (M:59–60). He is shocked. Others ridicule him for his naivete, but G. begins reading books to find an explanation. He cannot, and forgets the event for the time being (M:61).
- Alexandropol 14 G. begins holiday trips to Alexandropol to visit uncle and to earn money in small craft jobs (M:61). He later indicates his family's poverty at the time deeply wounded his self-love and thereby he did not want to show others in Kars that he was earning money (M:61–62).
- 1888
- Alexandropol 16 G. is shot in the leg while hunting with friends. He is amazed how it could have been foretold by a local fortune-teller (G. calls him also "Ashokh"), as conveyed to G. by his aunt just a week before the event (M:63).
- Alexandropol 16 Later "that summer" (M:64), while carving the date "1888" on a sign for a neighbor's wedding to take place in a few days (M:65), G. witnesses a Yezidi boy's inability to get out of the circle children drew around him. He is again shocked and searches for explanations. Elders' response, including a physician's, do not convince him. G. has already begun to drink vodka occasionally (M:67).
- Alexandropol 16 "Five or six days after" the Yezidi circle incident (M:70), G. witnesses a Tartar man's body, revived after death, being put to death again in a ceremony to dispel the evil spirit that had crept into him (M:70–71). He is deeply astonished. The "worm" (M:70) of curiosity moves him to read more and more books.
- Kars 16 G. and a classmate, Karpenko, quarreling over mutual affections toward a friend's sister, participate in a "duel with canons" on a nearby artillery range. Both survive, leading to their friendship. But the near-death experience deeply affects G., again reminding him of the purpose of life and death on Earth. This is seven years before the excavations at ruins of Ani in Armenia in 1895 (M:208).
- Kars 16 Bogachevsky leaves Kars. His tutoring of G. ends, but G.'s "confessions" to him through correspondence continue (M:72). Dean Borsh has gone away on leave of absence due to illness (M:199). There is talk in G.'s family of going back to live in Alexandropol in the near future (M:200). G. contemplates also leaving Kars, dreaming of perhaps joining the "Archdeacon's Choir" group in Tiflis (M:200).
- Kars/Tiflis 16 G. learns of the possibility of his being interrogated and punished by authorities for participating in the "duel" incident with Karpenko in the artillery range (M:200). He leaves Kars immediately for Tiflis (M:72, 200).

The Search Period (1888–1912)

- | Date/Place | Age | Event |
|----------------|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1888
Tiflis | 16 | Having found no satisfactory answers in contemporary books or people of science accessible to him, G. begins seeking answers to his "abstract questions" in religion (M:79). Not having succeeded in entering the "Archdeacon's Choir" group in Tiflis, G. spends three months in the monastery of "Sanaine," and makes pilgrimages to most of the holy places of different faiths in Transcaucasia (M:79). During this time, G. encounters new "miracles," involving miraculous curing of a paralytic on Mount Djajur (M:79), miracle raining in Kars as a result |

of prayers (M:81–82), and dream healing of an old neighbor's bride in Alexandropol (M:82–83).

16 -> From 1888 until 1892, which corresponds to G.'s transition from preparatory to responsible age (L:13), G. engages in all kinds of professions and crafts conceivable not only to earn a livelihood, but also to learn skills necessary to adapt himself to various conditions necessary to realize and materially support his spiritual searches (H:17).

- Constantinople 16 Before his first visit to Echmiadzin (M:178), G. goes to Constantinople to learn more about the dervishes there (M:178). He stays in the district of Pera and meets with many "dervish zealots" and "dervish nonsense" (M:178). Realizes he is out of money, and chooses the job of diving in waters to fetch tourists' coins. Meets Pasha N, and through him, his son and future "remarkable" friend, Ekim Bey (M:181–82). Ekim Bey later grows up to become a highly skilled and professional hypnotist/magician, and perhaps G.'s contact to an association of mostly "Persian" magicians in Tabriz (M:252). Their first meeting in Pera perhaps indirectly reflects their common interests in and preoccupations with hypnotism. Later G. would say about Ekim Bey that "through all kinds of trivial incidents our inner worlds had been drawn together like two 'arising from the same source', our feelings for each other was like that of brothers" (M:177).
- Kars 16 Toward the end of the year, G. gives his father in Kars a visit, and meets Pogossian's, his future friend's, parents who in turn give him a parcel (a Christmas gift) to take to Pogossian (M:79) who studies religion in Echmiadzin.
- 1888–1889
Echmiadzin 16 16–17: G., first time in Echmiadzin, Armenia, in continuation of his religious search (M:79), for the first time meets the "remarkable" Pogossian (who in two years would become ordained as a priest) and stays with him for three weeks after the holidays (M:85). This takes place two years before they meet again in Tiflis.
- 17 Ages 16–17 are the beginning of an important period of spiritual "self-preparation" for him, as it is reflected in his mythologized self-image Ashiata Shiemash later created in the First Series of his mature writings (B:353–54). It is also during this period of transition to responsible age that he begins to doubt the effectiveness of all past (otherwise genuine) religions based on the impulses of Faith, Hope, and Love (B:354).
- 1889
Tiflis 17 Returning to Tiflis, disillusioned about his religious searches, G. meets Abram Yelow, another "remarkable" friend, for the first time (M:109). Gets involved with him in a plaster-ware business, and makes money.
- Tiflis 18 G. works in the railway station in Tiflis as a stoker. Pogossian, having graduated from seminary, meets G. again in Tiflis and, being dissatisfied with his priesthood career-to-be, accepts G.'s suggestion of working at the railway station (M:86). "Until October" (M:86) they continue exploring their "abstract questions."
- region 18 In October, G. separates from Pogossian briefly and for three months works on the road as an aid to a railway engineer (M:86–87). Slyly makes money from various townspeople (using his advance knowledge of railway construction plans) by pretending to "arrange" the passage of railway line near their towns.
- 1891
Ani, Armenia 19 Upon return from his railway exploits, G. meets Pogossian again and finds him occupied as a locksmith and engrossed in ancient literature. Having collected enough money to retire for a while, they decide to go to and live in the ancient Armenian ruins at Ani, and devote their time quietly to study (M:87). During this time, G. and Pogossian carry out excavations in the ruins at Ani. In one of these excavations, G. and Pogossian find old letters of an Armenian priest reporting about the survival of a certain "Sarmoung Brotherhood" (claimed to be a secret society formed 2500 BC in Babylon, but disappearing about 700 A.D.). In G.'s account (M:87–90, 208) about excavations in the ruins, there is no mention of anyone other than Pogossian during the specific incident of discovery (and search) (M:87–89) and search for the "Sarmoung" that ensued.

- To Egypt 19 As couriers for Armenian secret societies, G. and Pogossian set off on the traces of the "Sarmoung" in the valley of Izrumin. After a two month journey (M:96), they discover in the possessions of an Armenian priest a parchment depicting a map of "pre-sand" Egypt. This causes them to decide to go instead to Egypt. In four months (M:101), having arrived at the town Smyrna, and after a fighting incident involving English sailors, they are invited to join them on a Greek ship to go to Egypt. Pogossian decides to stay with the ship, and G. alone sets foot on Egypt.
- Egypt/
Jerusalem 19 After initial wanderings in Egypt, G. goes on a trip to Jerusalem where he earns money as a tour guide (M:119).
- Jerusalem/
Egypt 19 Returning from Jerusalem, G. works as a guide in the Egyptian sites. During these "early years of [his] responsible life" (M:225), G. meets for the first time Professor Skridlov who ends up being a close and "remarkable" friend to him. G. also meets Skridlov's friend Prince Lubovedsky, already middle-aged, while G. was still a "young man" (M:119), who ends up also being G.'s remarkable life-long friend for almost forty years (until 1930) (M:118).
- 1891–1892
Egypt/
Babylon 19 19–20: Soon after these meetings with the Prince, Skridlov joins G.'s first expedition with Prince Lubovedsky that ends in ancient Thebes (M:225). After three weeks in one of the tombs, discussing "abstract themes," Prince Lubovedsky leaves for Russia, while G. and Skridlov continue their journey up the Nile to its source, go into Abyssinia, there they stay for about three months and coming back to the Red sea, pass through Syria reaching the ruins of Babylon where they stay for another four months (M:225). Skridlov then stays behind and returns to Thebes for further excavations (M:226), while G. departs through Meshed [sic] to Ispahan [sic] (M:225) with two new rug dealer friends whom he met in a village near Babylon. [Perhaps G. means here going to Mashhad *through* Isfahan, as Isfahan is on the way between Iraq and Mashhad.]
- 1892
Mecca 20 G. becomes very interested in Islam, and after great difficulties travels to Mecca and Medina, but finds nothing there (M:227). He finds that the heart of Islam is not to be sought there, but in Bukhara (M:227).
- 20 By this time (during the 1888–1892 period) the "fundamental aim" of G.'s life is established and deeply ingrained in his whole being as an "irrepressible striving" (H:13): "to understand clearly the precise significance, in general, of the life process on Earth of all the outward forms of breathing creatures and, in particular, of the aim of human life in the light of this interpretation" (H:13). About this crucial period of his life lasting about four to five years G. later writes: "The degree of fusion with my Being and the dominating influence on my psyche of this peculiar factor were such, that, after four or five years, I fell completely under its power, and since then it has, like an 'itching itch', constantly compelled the whole of me or the separate parts of my general individuality, cost what it may, to elucidate everything for the cognition of all which can serve for the final solution of these, for me, cardinal questions. Having become in my inner life, in the full sense of the word, a slave of such "aim," ... I lived absorbed in these researches until the year 1892" (H:15–16).
- 20 Until this year, G. finds absolutely nothing, "anywhere or from anybody," that could answer the questions that was tormenting him (H:16). He becomes convinced that "it would be utterly impossible to find out what I was looking for among my contemporaries and therefore decided one day to abandon everything and to retire for a definite period into complete isolation, away from all manifestations of the outer world, and to endeavor by means of reflections to attain to this myself or to think out some new way for my fertile searches" (H:17–18).
- Central Asia 20 G. accidentally meets a "street-barber" who introduces him to an Islamic monastery where G. stays and seriously meditates (H:18). For "three days," G. analyses all the information gained in his life until then about the questions tormenting him (H:18). He (re)discovers the significance of the "subconscious"

- and that answers to all “cardinal questions” can be found in “man’s subconscious-mentation” (H:19). G. decides to perfect his knowledge about the human psyche (H:19) and spends several more days meditating on the matter. G. leaves the monastery, and begins again wandering with no definite plan (H:19).
- 1893 21 Two years after their last meeting in Egypt and ruins in Babylon (M:226) G. meets Skridlov again in the town of Orenburg, accompanied by Prince Lubovedsky (M:226). They begin their big expedition across Siberia according to the programme drawn up by “Seekers of Truth” (M:226) (perhaps informally envisioned prior to its formal organization in 1895).
- Caucasus,
Suram 21 G., while involved in a “plaster-of-Paris” business to make money, is joined by his friends Pogossian, Yelov, and Karpenko that summer (M:182). He is also joined by Ekim Bey, who meets all of G.’s friends (M:182). They spend the entire summer traveling to remote regions of the Caucasus. Ekim Bey becomes interested in joining the others in accepting what G. describes as Prince Lubovedsky’s idea for a big expedition on foot, “starting from the frontier town of Nakhichevan and crossing Persia to the Persian Gulf” (M:183).
- 1894
Persia 22 In January, the Persian expedition begins (M:183). There are 23 people in the company. Prof. Skridlov is among them (M:183). Dr. Sari-Ogli (M:184), and Prince Nijeradze (M:191), and Karpenko are also there. G.’s meeting with Dr. Sari-Ogli for the first time in this trip is “five years” (M:170) before the Gobi desert expedition of 1898 (M:165). Having passed through Tabriz, they meet a Persian dervish who turns G.’s “outlook on life completely upside down” (M:183). G. had been following the (Hatha) Yogi teachings of mysticism until then (M:185). Having been questioned by the dervish, G. realizes the hitherto one-sidedness of his approach to mysticism (M:186) and begins to see the value of a synthetic approach to world mysticism. G. realizes that mystical teachings, if followed without care and proper guidance, could actually harm the person (M:189–190). Ekim Bey, to whom G. refers as someone very similar to himself (M:177), being fascinated with the dervish (M:191), asks him many questions about the “physical body” of man (M:191), information that G. decades later promises to incorporate in the Third Series of his writings (but never does). After a week of this meeting, the company goes to Baghdad, where Prince Nijeradze and Karpenko recuperate from sickness (M:191), a month after which, the camp divides. Prince Lubovedsky, Yelov, and Ekim Bey head for Constantinople (M:191), while Karpenko, Nijeradze and Pogossian follow the Euphrates upstreams. G. and Dr. Sari-Ogli, with the rest (including Prof. Skridlov?), go toward Khorassan (M:191).
- 22 G. has a chance meeting with Dervish Bogga Eddin (M:155).
- Constantinople 22 Having decided to go to Bukhara, G.’s trip is interrupted by his chance meeting with Lubovedsky in Constantinople. G. talks with Prince Lubovedsky for the “last but one” (M:121) time in Constantinople (they won’t see each other for “two” (M:155) or “several” (M:134) years that will be their last meeting in the Sarmoung monastery).
- 22 As part of his meeting with the Prince, G. meets for the first time Vitvitskaya and escorts her, at the request of Prince Lubovedsky, to Prince’s sister’s residence in Tambov province in Russia (M:126). (G. does not see Vitvitskaya again until “at least four years later” in Rome (M:126). From a victim of white slave trade, Vitvitskaya will turn out to become a “remarkable” woman, the only “remarkable” woman mentioned as such in Gurdjieff’s autobiography.
- 22 Meanwhile, the Prince heads for Ceylon.
- 1894–1895 22 Coming back from Russia having accompanied Vitvitskaya following Prince Lubovedsky’s request (M:226–27), G. meets Skridlov by chance on a train. Skridlov expresses interest in going with G. to Bukhara. Two months later (M:228), they meet again in Tiflis for this purpose, but upon reaching Old Merv, they change course and decide to go up the Amu Darya into Kafirstan (M:227). This trip takes about a year (M:227). Partly on ship, and later by foot, they finally arrive at the settlement of Afridis, at the heart of Kafirstan (M:236).

- Intending to move further toward Chitral, they meet the "remarkable" father Giovanni (M:237), who introduces himself and invites them to stay at the monastery of the World Brotherhood (M:239), among whom were "Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, Buddhists, Lamaists, and even one Shamanist" (M:239). Other monasteries of this brotherhood are said to be in Pamir, Tibet, and India (M:241). They stay there for about six months (M:244). Father Giovanni introduces them to knowledge about the "Divine Body of Man" (M:243), which G. later intends to draw upon in his Third Series of writings (but never does). They both, especially Skridlov, feel their questions have been answered to the point where they felt they had nothing more to seek (M:244). They return toward Russia and depart in Tiflis.
- 1895 23 Prince Lubovedsky, having spend a year and a half in Ceylon and after an expedition up the river Ganges, finds himself disillusioned in Kabul. Although until then he kept up correspondence with G., soon, upon meeting with a Tamil dervish, breaks off all relations with everyone (dying to his past life), and is taken finally to the Sarmoung (M:160).
- 23 In Bukhara, G. meets a certain Soloviev who, with the help of G.'s hypnotic skills, succeeds in ridding himself of alcoholism and addiction, later becoming an authority on traditional medicine himself. He is another "remarkable" man mentioned in Gurdjieff's autobiography.
- Sarmoung 23 Following directions given by an elderly man introduced to G. by Dervish Bogga Eddin, and after a difficult two-week guided journey from Yeni-Hissar under oath, with heads covered, G. and Soloviev succeed in entering the Sarmoung brotherhood. There G. surprisingly finds and meets Prince Lubovedsky for the last time. G. and Soloviev were with the Prince in the monastery for about three months (M:163) until the Prince left for another monastery, having been told by his elders that he had only three more years to live (M:163) (though the Prince actually will live much longer). This is five years after G.'s first meeting with the Prince in Egypt. Their correspondence actually continue for another 35 years [until 1930].
- Alexandropol 23 Returning from the Sarmoung Brotherhood, and during the summer, G. becomes preoccupied with "experiments" with sound in solitude and in isolation in a makeshift laboratory of sorts he has set up. Karpenko, passing by Alexandropol to go to Kars to visit parents, gives G. a visit, and becomes interested in his experiments. After a few days' visit to Kars, Karpenko returns and stays with G. throughout the summer. Later at the end of that summer, which is "seven years after" the artillery range duel incident (M:208), Karpenko joins G. and other members of the "recently formed" Seekers of Truth (M:208), in carrying out (further) excavations among the ruins of Ani in Armenia (M:208). Soloviev also joins the Seekers ("Soon after" the trip to the Chief monastery of the Sarmoung) (M:164).
- 1896
Crete 24 G. heads for Crete, one year before the Greco-Turkish War. He is wounded with a stray bullet (L:7). He is brought, unconscious, to Jerusalem (L:7). Upon recovery sets on foot toward Russia accompanied by other members of Seekers of Truth (L:7-8). Arrives in Transcaucasia in four months and rests at home for another few months (L:8).
- 1897
Rome 25 Four years after their first meeting during a visit to Prince Lubovedsky, G., as a shoe-shiner, accidentally meets Vitvitskaya in Rome (M:126).
- 1898
Gobi Desert 26 G., together with other members of Seekers of Truth (including Prof. Skridlov, Karpenko, Dr. Sari-Oglu, Pogossian, Yelov, Soloviev, Vitvitskaya, and others), carry out an expedition into the Gobi Desert. It is about a year and a half after G.'s second meeting in Rome (1901) with Vitvitskaya that she joins G. and Prof. Skridlov in "one of our big expeditions" (M:127), becoming thereafter a permanent member of Seekers of Truth until her death in Russia (M:134). Karpenko also formally joins the Seekers of Truth at this time which is three years after G.'s last meeting with Karpenko (M:209). During this trip, Soloviev is killed by wild camels (M:165).

- Alexandropol 26 G. visits family, which is now back living in their old house in Alexandropol. G. remains longer with them (M:252) and commutes often to Baku, being in contact with a society of mostly Persians studying ancient magic (M:252). G. had been an associate member of this for a long time (M:252), perhaps soon after he met Ekim Bey in Constantinople in 1888. In one of these trips, G. buys an old phonograph and decides to make money with it. Travels to Krasnovodsk and Kizil-Arvat for this purpose. On the way to Ashkhabad, meets Vitvitskaya. Having still "a good many months free" (M:254) before a planned expedition, and challenged by Vitvitskaya to prove his point, G. wagers he's able to make lots of money in a short time simply by manual work (M:254).
- 1899
Ashkhabad 27 G. and Vitvitskaya establish "The Universal Travelling Workshop" (M:255). In three and a half months they make fifty thousand roubles (M:265). G. begins a long period of feverish money-making activities alongside his spiritually motivated expeditions (M:269).
- 1900
Pamir
expedition 28 On January 2, members of Seekers of Truth gather in Chardzhou in Transcaspian region to begin their "last big expedition" (M:252) through the Amu Darya, the Pamir region and India. The group includes Karpenko, Prof. Skridlov, Vitvitskaya, Dr. Sari-Ogli, and others (M:209–224). The group is struck by a big avalanche. A guide and Baron X, "an ardent occultist," are killed (M:209). Trying to find a way out without a guide, they run across a fakir living in the forest. After witnessing the fakir's healing and magnetic powers, they decide to follow using makeshift rafts on the river Chitral to river Kabul that joins later the Indus river (M:219). During this trip, Karpenko is shot and wounded by nearby natives, and dies two years later, "quite young," in central Russia (M:224). The fakir ("ez-ezounavouran") whom they met during this journey was a source of G.'s knowledge about the "astral body" of man (M:223), about which G. later promises to elaborate in his Third Series of writings (but never does).
- 1900–1901 28 28–29: During all the previous journeys lasting several years, G. gradually formed a definite plan of learning more about hypnotism, but much more than what he has already known about it "as my own five fingers" (H:19). He had decided to collect all the written and oral information on the subject from a wide variety of places and people he visited. Now G. decides to settle for a continuous period of time and study the material carefully. For this purpose he goes to a dervish monastery in Central Asia where he had been before, and devotes all his time to learning more about hypnotism (H:19–20). He spends a two year period of his life in "theoretical study" of the subconscious mind and hypnotism.
- 1902
Tibet 30 G. is "punctured" by a second stray bullet in the mountains of Tibet one year before the Anglo-Tibetan War (L:9). Three to four months is spent unconscious (L:9). Five doctors in his (Seekers of Truth?) company, three European, and two Tibetan, take care of him. G. ends up at the edge of the Gobi desert recovering in six weeks. As he was about to leave, he took off to a nearby river and then proceeded in him an important self-reasoning that resulted in his discovering a way to never forget his "I," to always self-remember, using the parallel between his inner conflict of good and evil and God's creation of the devil. G. takes an oath never to use his "accidentally learned" powers of telepathy and hypnotism for satisfying his personal "vices," that include sexual/food desires. He excludes from this oath, however, the use of such powers for "scientific purposes" (L:19–26).
- 1903
Tiflis 31 Following his two years of systematic study of "hypnotism" (H:20), G. begins "experiments" by giving himself out as a "healer" during which he claims to also have provided people with "real relief" (H:20). This is the beginning of his "exclusive preoccupation and manifestation" "for four or five years" (1901–1904) during which he not only develops practical skills of unprecedented kind in hypnotic healing of others, but also of elucidating "almost everything

necessary" for himself with regards to his spiritual quest (H:20). He even discovers facts he had "scarcely suspected" (H:20). Later during this period, G. becomes aware also of the need to study human behavior during waking consciousness as adding important "minor details" for finalizing his knowledge about human psyche (H:20).

1904

Transcaucasia 32 G. is again struck by a stray bullet in the neighborhood of Chiatura Tunnel for the third time (L:9), perhaps caught between the firings of revolutionary "Gourians" and the Russian army Cossacks (L:9). G. recovers from a difficult life and death condition in a mountain cave. To avoid further danger from "revolutionary psychosis," G. goes further into the Transcasian region to avoid being caught in the fighting between Tartars and Armenians (L:12). G. goes with a friend to Ashkhabad (L:13). His friend being arrested, G. sets out for Central Asia. Arrives in the city of Yangihissar in Chinese Turkestan. Borrows money from friends and goes to the edge of the Gobi desert where he had been several years before, recovering from the second stray bullet injury (L:16).

32 G. spends time in the edge of the Gobi desert (L:16). Remembers the self-reasoning that had proceeded in him two years before in the same place. G.'s aim splits into two directions: one, to understand the meaning of human life on Earth, and second, to understand and destroy the phenomenon of "mass hypnosis" (L:27). His "worm" of curiosity becomes two-headed (L:28). This is the end of his experiments as a healer.

1906

34 A two-year period of more wanderings in Asia, Europe, and Africa begins (H:21).

1907

35 G. adopts the "fundamental principle ... to take on myself sole responsibility for the accomplishment of my work, without accepting any material help from the outside" (M:287).

1908

36 Following two years of "wandering" on the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, G. begins giving himself out to be a "professor-instructor" during the two years 1908-9. This was a period of high agitation in theosophical circles (H:21). Within six months of this two-year "theosophy" period, G. becomes well-known and established among them as an authority (H:21). G. treats them as "Guinea-pigs" "allotted to me by Destiny for my experiments" (H:22). At the time, wondering about the fairness of his project of using people for scientific aims, G. decides that the benefits received by those associated with his activities balances the roles they play in meeting his own aims (H:24).

1909

St. Petersburg 37 G. meets and marries his wife. This is the end of his three year period of giving himself out as "professor-instructor" (H:21).

1910

38 At the beginning of the third year of his "theosophy" period, despite the fertile grounds of three such "workshops" he then attended, G. decides to form his own "circle" "on quite new principles, with a staff of people chosen specially by me" (H:22). Since only three or four "types" were represented in the "workshops" of theosophists, G. decides to form his own group so that he could expand the number of "human types" to all the "28" needed for his "experiments" (H:22). G. forms in various cities three small groups composed of as many "varying types" as possible (H:22-23).

1911

39 September 13 or 14 is the date on which G. takes a special oath to lead for the following twenty one years an "artificial" and "protracted and, for me, absolutely unnatural life" modeled upon a "programme" previously designed for "definite principles" (H:11-12). This is the "second year" of the existence of G.'s own groups that he had tried to form prior to the decision to establish the Institute (H:23).

Russian

Turkestan

39 G. later reports (see 1932 further below) on having made arrangements in 1911 with a certain "brotherhood" in the "very heart of Asia" to send his most fertile pupils to them as part of a "mutual" agreement made with them (H:59). The agreement involves an obligation on the part of G. to abide by "religious and moral actions" in the future, and an obligation on the part of the brotherhood to train his students according to guidelines strictly indicated by G. (H:59).

- 1912 40 Having formed his own groups during the previous three years, and seeking to make a more permanent organization in order to carry out his experiments, G. finally decides to found the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man (H:23). As to its location, G. decides to set up his Institute in Moscow.

The Teaching Period (1912–1949)

Date/Place	Age	Event
1912–1913 Moscow	40	40–41: “A year or two before the (First) World War,” having amassed the amount of million roubles and collections of antiques, G. enters Moscow and begins his “sacred task” of founding his school (M:270). Organizes series of lectures in Moscow and St. Petersburg (M:270). Purchases estate, buys equipment, arranges to publish his own newspaper (M:271). Spends almost half of his collection for the above purpose.
1914 Moscow region	42	“Glimpses of Truth,” perhaps written by one of Gurdjieff’s pupils following his directions, is read aloud in a meeting with G. where P. D. Ouspensky is present.
	42	World War breaks out. G. is compelled to go to Caucasus for the end of hostilities. Revolutionary situation in Russia and the region poses new difficulties. Period of “most intense nervous strain” begins (M:271). Founding the Institute in Moscow fails.
1915 Piatigorsk	43	G. meets Prof. Skridlov for the last time (M:244), before the latter’s disappearance in the midst of the “agitation of minds in Russia” (M:225).
	43	April: G. and P. D. Ouspensky (the noted Russian mathematician and spiritual seeker, to become his most senior pupil) meet for the first time in a Moscow cafe. G. has deliberately planned this meeting by putting an ad in a Moscow newspaper about his projected demonstration of his ballet “Struggle of the Magicians.” Later, the piece “Glimpses of Truth” turns out to be a foretold tale of Ouspensky’s first meeting with G., read to him aloud by one of G.’s pupils in Ouspensky’s first visit to G.’s flat.
1916 Alexandropol Finland	44	G. visits father (who is now 82 years old) for the last time (M:42).
	44	August: Ouspensky reports (1948) that G. communicated with him telepathically in a gathering and outside it.
St. Petersburg	44	Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann and his wife Olga are introduced to G. (T, 6). They become his pupils.
1917 Alexandropol	45	February and October revolutions in Russia.
	45	Turkish army attacks Alexandropol. Family leaves except G.’s father who is wounded by Turkish soldiers while defending his home. He dies soon and is buried there (M:45).
1918 Essentuki	46	G. tries opening a branch of the “Institute” in Essentuki, Caucasus region. G. converts his money to valuables in case of future need (M:294).
Tiflis	46	Four years after the beginning of the organization of the Institute in Moscow, and having passed through great hardships in the Caucasus mountains, G. and the extended party of pupils and relatives under his protection arrive in Tiflis (M:277). During this time, G. provides livelihood for nearly two hundred people (M:277). More of G.’s relatives arrive. G. finds himself with no money in pocket (M:279). Begins a carpet business (M:280). It takes off. G. begins to open (for the third time) a new branch of the Institute in Tiflis (M:280). But increasing chaos leads him to liquidate everything, break with everything in Russia, and emigrate to another country.
Constantinople	46	G. and company arrive at Constantinople from Tiflis. Established in Pera for months, G. continues the Institute activities (M:282–3). A year is spent there, before visas for Germany arrive.

- Berlin 46 G. and company arrive in Germany. While seeking to purchase a dance institute property in Dresden, English pupils offer to help G. to establish his Institute in England (M:284).
- London 46 G. arrives in London to consider the state of affairs and the possibility of becoming established there. Decides the best place to found his Institute would be not there, but in France.
- 1921
France 49 G.'s Institute is finally established in France (H:40).
- 1922
Paris 50 Summer: G. decides the Chateau du Prieuré in Fontainebleau to be the permanent location of the Institute and his residence (M:285).
- 1922
Fontainebleau 50 October: G. moves with fifty students to Chateau du Prieuré (M:285). The "maddest period" of his life begins (M:285). For the first time, G. decides to depart from his principle imposed upon himself fifteen years before (M:287) of funding the Institute only from his own finances. After several months of feverish business activity (including curing people addicted to alcohol and drugs), G. succeeds in paying back all the money he had borrowed till then (M:288).
- 1923
Paris 51 December: G. and students publicly perform for the first time in Paris his sacred dances and movements. The prospectus of the "Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man According to the System of G. I. Gurdjieff" is distributed.
- 1924
New York 52 January: G. sails with a large company of pupils to perform his demonstrations and dances in America.
- 52 January: G.'s lecture "The Variety, According to Law, of the Manifestation of Human Individuality" is read in front of him to an audience in Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City (B:1189).
- 52 G. and students publicly perform for the first time in America his sacred dances and movements.
- 52 On April 24, G. delivers in New York a talk that is later revised by him on April 8, 1931, and posthumously compiled and printed under the title "The Material Question" (M:247).
- 52 G. appoints A. R. Orage (noted literary editor and critique), upon latter's volunteering, as his provisional representative in the United States G. plans to come back to the United States within six months (L:92). G. later claims that the real cause of Orage's interest in remaining in America was his new affair with an employee/owner of a bookshop where G. delivered his talk (L:93).
- Fontainebleau 52 G. and students return to France.
- 52 July 8th: G. has a near-fatal car accident. Spends three months without "memory and powers of combination" and six months more in a semiconscious state (L:93). This prevents him from going back to the United States to repay all his debts, and to organize a new branch of the Institute there (M:297).
- 52 At the beginning of the second stage of his recovery (i.e., after three months from accident) G. gives orders to liquidate his business and most of his Institute affairs as a result of the crisis generated in his absence (L:93).
- 52 In October, G. hears of regular money being forwarded from his American followers through Orage (L:94).
- 52 G. decides to begin writing himself (H:41). Later on, in *The Herald of Coming Good*, during 1932–1933, G. will refer to the "vicious laziness" of those who had promised to help him spread his ideas through writing (most likely referring to P. D. Ouspensky), but had not—prompting G. to become writer himself.
- 1925
Fontainebleau 53 From January 1st, G. slowly begins dictating and soon writing the First Series of his books (M:297) (L:32). Begins new business activities in antiques (M:298). Has an apartment in Paris.

- 53 G.'s mother dies. His wife is diagnosed with cancer.
- 53 In October hears of the continuation, though in diminished amount, of the money being forwarded to him from America through Orage (L:94). G. decides to make an exception and establishes contacts with his American followers regarding continuation of his Institute work (L:49).
- 1926 54 G.'s wife dies in June.
- 1927 55 G. finishes the first draft of the First Series of his writings (M:1; L, 2-5).
- France 55 G. begins writing (the "Introduction" to) the Second Series *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, that would later be "revised by the author over a period of many years (M:publisher, vi) (M:1).
- 55 At this "third year of [his] literary activity" (L:48) G. begins working on (the original version of) the last book of his Third Series (L:47).
- 55 On November 6th, early morning in Paris, G. conducts the "self-reasoning" which later appears at the beginning of the prologue to his Third Series (L:2). The reason for this self-reasoning is as follows: on November 6th, G. realizes that the first version of his First Series, upon which he had worked for more than three years already (L:4) was practically incomprehensible to his audience and thus had to be revised. His sense of deterioration of his health gives him a sense that he may not finish his writings at all. However, G. makes a categorical decision to devote all his energies to devise a plan by January 1928 for the revising of the whole manuscript and completing his writings as a whole (L:33-34).
- 55 On November 6, midnight, G. recalls a telegram received from Orage, asking for help with his health. G. is himself suffering from his own health problems (L:152-53).
- 55 Toward the end of the year (still 1927) G. decides on achieving three aims in the following seven years (L:35): 1-rewrite the whole First Series; 2-clear up for himself issues still unresolved about human psyche; 3-rejuvenate his health.
- 55 Just before Christmas, G. remembers the "moral suffering" of enduring his mother's and wife's sickness and death during his work on the First Series as being important cause of his concentration on his writings (L:37-41). His discovery gives him renewed strength.
- 1928 56 From January 1, G. renews efforts in writing, splitting his waking time into two parts until April 23: 1-working on finding out how to revise the first draft of his First Series (M:42); and 2-finding ways about how to accomplish the rest of his writings. Decides to proceed with implementing his plan for outer life by three-month intervals between meditations (L:43). G. formulates his three "will-tasks" (mental, emotional, physical) (L:44). Decides not to allow those people in his eyesight who make life too comfortable for him and/or drain his energy (L:45).
- France 56 April 23 (old calendar), May 6 (new calendar): G.'s seven year plan begins.
- 1929 57 January: G. makes his second trip to America.
- America 58 February: G. makes his third trip to America.
- 1930 58 G.'s material problems reaches its zenith (M:299), begins an antique business in America, but it fails due to the Great Depression (M:300).
- America 58 G. finishes a complete early draft of (the original version of) the last ("summarizing-concluding") book of his Third Series (L:48). On the very day he completes it, he destroys it in its entirety (L:48); not only this draft "but also everything prepared for the affirmation of the spirit of its essence" (L:48). The reason is that as he was putting the "last polish" on the content of this "book so important for the whole totality of my writings" (L:48), G. began to notice strange peculiarities not only in himself but also in those around him (L:48). As soon as he discovered this fact, G. found out that what he had written for this

"last book" was entirely worthless (L:48). Having destroyed it, he realizes that he had to write a new (last) book with an entirely new content.

- 58 November: G. travels to America (for the fourth time) (M:300; L, 65), arriving on November 13 (L:67). In a meeting during the evening of his first day, G. (again) notices the "strange" behavior among his followers in America. Begins delivering his talks of the Third Series on November 28th (L:59). In the first meeting, G. reports that his "searches" until then had begun "half a century before" (L:77), that is they began in 1880, when he was eight years old (this is the time when his grandmother gave him her advice before passing away).
- 58 G. continues to deliver the rest of his talks of the Third Series (L:59). In his second talk, G. refers to the seven year interruption in his work since his auto accident in July 8, 1924, and suggests his intention to start his organizing efforts in America again (L:96). He refers to his having already worked on "ten big volumes," and to his intention to give a final polishing to them" (L. 97). Despite his intention to begin the first branch ("club") of the Institute outside France in the United States, G. suggests the obstacles created as a result of misinstructions received by his pupils from Orage (L:97-98). Thus, G. postpones the organization until the following year (L:98). He delivers the statement of non-allegiance to Orage, to be signed in a couple of days by any student intending to enter the preparation efforts for the opening of the new "club" in the United States (L:100-101).
- 58 Presenting his third talk to a rarefied audience composed only of students who readily signed the Orage statement, G. suggests that they should begin by ceasing to read anything but all the three books of his First Series (L:103). This third talk includes G.'s most explicit statement of exercises directly concerning the title of his Third Series: *Life Is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'* (L:107).
- 58 Two days before the fourth general meeting (December 10) (L:120) Orage, arriving from England to respond to the crisis at hand in United States, signs the statement himself as well, later encouraging other unsigned students to do the same. G. is pleasantly shocked and applies a rigorous policy of fining the late signers (and those who signed but did not participate in the talks) (L:120). A total of \$113,000 is collected, half retained by G. and the remainder used to form a fund to aid the materially needy students (L:127).
- 58 On December 12, G. delivers his fourth talk of the first book of his Third Series (L:59). G. reports on Orage's arrival and the ensuing events. Continues his teaching deliberations. The passage of this talk in the Third Series is unfinished/cut off.
- 58 On December 19, G. delivers his fifth talk (L:131).
- 58 These five talks are compiled later by G. as constituting the first book of the Third Series (L:67; H, 25).
- 58 The forty-year friendship and correspondence of G. with Prince Lubovedsky ends (M:118), due to Prince's death (perhaps at the age of 110+).
- 1931
America 59 On January 13 (old style), his birthday, G. suggests that only the First Series and the first two chapters of the Second Series have been so far completed in "final form" (M:303).
- France 59 Mid. March: G. sails back to France.
- America 59 G. makes his fifth visit to America.
- 59 Sitting in Childs Cafe in New York on April 8th, G. revises the manuscript "The Material Question" from pupil's notes and adds a new final section (M:297). He may be referring to this later in *Herald* as the "the first book of the Third Series" where the period of initial difficulties in establishing the Institute in Russia and other places are depicted (H:25). [Translators of *Meetings* explicitly suggest that this piece was not intended for the Second Series (M:xi); hence it could not have been intended as the "third book of the Second Series of my writings."]
- 1932
France 60 G. sails back to France.
- 60 May: G. closes the Prieuré (site of his Institute) for lack of funds (T, 19).

- 60 G. begins on Tue. September 13th (H:11) (L:49) his *The Herald of Coming Good*, the only book to be published (and abruptly withdrawn from circulation) by himself during his own lifetime. He in fact reports that on this day he has also finally succeeded in compiling all the material he intended to gather (first drafts?) for the purpose of writing all series of his writings (H:11); in other words, G. reports that he is almost done with drafting all the writing he *planned and intended* to do for all his series. He goes on further to suggest that this day also marks the final completion date of the final version of the First Series of his writing (H:11). *Herald* is announced to be the first of seven “appeals” he intends to make to “contemporary humanity” (H:11).
- 60 G. reports that Tuesday September 13 is that last day of the twenty one year period during which he had taken a special oath to lead “in some ways an artificial life” according to a “programme” he had planned for “definite principles” (H:11–12).
- 60 G. reports that the First Series of his books is “completely finished” and that it has been “given to the printer” (H:45). He announces that he intends to make the First Series accessible to the general public, the Second Series accessible to those joining the circle of “clubs” organized by him to learn about his teaching, and the Third Series only to those pupils practically involved in the work (H:56–57). He particularly insists that all his writings should be read in the order in which they were intended by him, otherwise “undesirable phenomena in their general psyche” may result, resulting in the “paralysis forever of the possibility of normal self-perfection” (H:58).
- 60 G. reports on having made arrangements, back in 1911, with a certain “brotherhood” in the “very heart of Asia” to send his most “fertile” pupils to them as part of a “mutual” agreement made with them (H:59). The agreement involves an obligation on the part of G. to abide by “religious and moral actions” in the future, and an obligation on the part of the brotherhood to train his students according to guidelines strictly indicated by G. (H:59). Ever since then and prior to his arrival in France, G. had sent “27 of both sexes” to the “aforesaid monastery” (H:60). Except for three of these (one later sent back, under a special “spell” of silence due to unworthy manifestation; one died due to a hereditary disease; and one died due to an accident) the rest remained and were trained by “elder brothers” and G.’s “former assistants” in the monastery whom he occasionally met in visits of the “search-after-truth” (H:60). G. also reports of having organized a community of his followers in one of the “States of Central Europe” to whom his writings are sent regularly (H:61).
- America 60 Sixth visit to America. G. alienates pupils.
1933
France 61 On January 13, G. finishes his *The Herald of Coming Good* (H:67).
61 G. declares that he is now renewing the activities of his Institute (H:76).
61 On Tuesday March 7, G. writes the concluding “supplementary announcement” (H:84) to *Herald* and claims to have published it in nine languages, 1,000 copies each. It is intended for private circulation among those who already know him. [In 1935 he will later advise those readers who have not already read the book, not to read it, out of respect for his health (L:50)].
61 G. ceases to write for a year to attain his health and productivity (L:50, 150).
America 61 G. travels to America (seventh trip). He does so chiefly for the purpose of attaining his health and productivity (L:50).
61 G. reports that by this time he had finished the “exposition in its first draft of all the material which I *had planned* to write, the First Series in its final form, the Second Series in its first version, and the third at least partly written” (L:63; emphasis added). [This is the most explicit indication that G. had in fact *planned not to finish* the Third Series after all].
1934
France 62 March 3: Alexandre Salzmann, the famous stage designer and pupil of G., dies; his wife, Jeanne de Salzmann, takes over directing his group, to later become his most senior pupil after G.’s death.

- America
- 62 June–July: G. visits Frank Lloyd Wright in Taliesin, Wisconsin. Wright's wife, a close pupil of G., had originally provided the introduction. Wright becomes the most noted admirer of G., inspired to establish his own Taliesin community.
- 62 October–November 5: G. repudiates his only published book *The Herald of Coming Good* and collects all distributed copies.
- 62 November 6, is the date of recommencement of G.'s writing after a year's interruption of writing (L:150). G. feels quite productive on this day: "That morning I felt like a 'mettlesome horse' let loose after having been confined for many months in the stable.... Work went so well that by nine o'clock I had succeeded in writing about fifteen pages of my notebook without a single correction" (L:150, 151).
- 62 On November 6, G. works on the introduction to his Third Series (L:57).
- 62 On November 6, G. works on the prologue to the Third Series (L:2). Remembers from seven years before to the day (November 6, 1927), the "self-reasoning" that now he partially inserts at the beginning of the prologue to his Third Series.
- 62 On November 6, G. also begins writing the (final version of the) last book of his Third Series (L:150). For the past month he has been thinking about how to write this last and "collected concluding" book of this Third Series (L:151).
- 62 November 5: A. R. Orage dies.
- 62 On November 6, at about 11:30 am (L:153), G. receives a phone call reporting that Orage has died that same morning (L:152). G. is shaken and wonders about all these coincidences hampering his efforts to complete his last book (L:152). Remembers the coincidence of Orage's health concerns communicated to him almost exactly seven years before (see 1927) (L:152–53).
- 62 For two months (until January 6th, 1935), G. is unable to write a single word (L:153), partly due to repeated interruptions by people offering condolences about Orage's death.
- 62 G. suggests that his three aims set seven years ago had already been achieved by now, excepting three reasons (L:47) (see below, 1935).
- 1935
- 63 On January 6, G. begins working again on his Third Series, after a two month lapse following hearing the news of Orage's death (L:153). But finds himself unable to do so despite all his wishes and efforts (L:161).
- 63 On April 2, G. finishes the last section of the prologue to the Third Series in observation of the arrival of his seven year deadline on his upcoming name day (April 23/May 6) (L:46). By April 9, the prologue is finally finished (L:161). In his prologue, G. advises those readers who have not already read the book *Herald of Coming Good*, not to read it, out of respect for his health (L:50).
- 63 On April 9, G. begins working again on the last book of the Third Series (L:161). Other coincidences occur (G.'s efforts to secure funds to repurchase his French headquarters fails due to the death of the potential benefactor Senator Bronson Cutting in a plane crash. Later, G.'s efforts to move back to Russia also fails) (Moore 1991).
- 63 On April 11, G.'s efforts of the previous day gradually begin to result in writing that seemed satisfactory to him, but soon he becomes stuck at the point when he has to deal with the problem of "prolongation of human life" (L:161). After many trials, and not being able to sleep on midnight of April 14th, Sunday, G., at day break, goes out to have coffee and decides to buy a newspaper. G. reports that for the past ten years (1925 onwards) he had scarcely read any newspapers or other readings, in order to write. He finds an article in a Russian newspaper on "the Problem of Old Age" that coincidentally corresponds to exactly what he wanted to say but was unable to do so because it always ended up being too long (L:163–64). With proper credits, he inserts the article in its entirety in his last book, fully satisfied. He continues on with the text until it is cut off apparently "incomplete."

- 63 G. reports that all three aims he set for himself regarding his writings, his knowledge about inner life, and his health, have been accomplished (L:46). He in fact claims they were already achieved a year before except for some lingering pain, the astrological untimeliness for publishing his writings, and especially that he decided last year to destroy what he had already completed three years prior as the text of his Third Series (L:48).
- 1938 Europe 66 France and England declare war on Germany.
- 1939 America 67 G.'s eighth trip to America.
67 World War II begins.
67 Ouspensky declines G.'s offer to heal his wife in England (Moore 1991:333).
- 1941 69 Germany invades Russia. United States declares war on Germany.
- 1942 France 70 France is occupied by Germans. G. advises Christian pupils to hide Jewish pupils from Germans. Needing money, G. tells creditors he has oil wells in America.
- 1947 America 75 Ouspensky, seriously ill, returns to England. Declines invitation to France by G. (Moore 1991:235). Ouspensky holds last public meetings during the year, and dies on October 2.
- 1948 France 76 G. invites all pupils to join him in France. Ouspensky's wife advises students to join G. Some vacillate. J. G. Bennett, an early pupil of Gurdjieff, is reintegrated into G.'s circles (Moore 1991:235).
76 August: G. is involved in an auto accident. Recovers.
76 December: G. sails to New York (9th and last visit). Authorizes Madame Ouspensky to publish her husband's *Fragment to An Unknown Teaching* (Moore 1991:235). This book becomes the standard, most widely read secondary source about G.'s teaching.
- 1949 France 77 G. announces imminent publication of *Beelzebub*.
77 February: G. and Jeanne de Salzmann sail back to France from New York.
77 October 14: Having collapsed in a movements class, G. is taken to his apartment.
77 October 21: G. receives the proofs of *Beelzebub*; gives his final instructions to Jeanne de Salzmann on October 27 (Moore 1991:336).
77 October 29: G. dies. He is buried (November 3) in a family plot in Fontainebleau-Avon, France, next to his mother's and wife's graves.
- 1950 — *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, the First Series of G.'s writings under the common title *All & Everything* is published by his senior pupils.
- 1959 — "Ten years after his death, his pupils decided to make known the whole body of his ideas, until then accessible only to themselves" (M:publisher, vii).
- 1960 France — Second Series, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, is first published in France (M:publisher, vii).
- 1963 England — Second Series is first published in English (M:publisher, viii).
- 1975 France — Third Series, *Life Is Real Only then, When "I Am"* is first published.
- 1978 France — A new edition of Third Series, *Life Is Real Only then, When "I Am"* is published in English, including some additional material.
- 1979 — The feature film "Meetings with Remarkable Men" directed by Peter Brook, with a screenplay written jointly by Jeanne de Salzmann and Peter Brook based on G.'s Second Series is released.

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(Courtesy of J. Walter Driscoll)

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ALL AND EVERYTHING

- Collective title Gurdjieff assigned to a series of three books:
First Series, 1950—*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*
Second Series, 1963—*Meetings with Remarkable Men*
Third Series, 1975, 1978—*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*

Printings of *Beelzebub's Tales*

Except for variations of title phrasing, correction of errata, and the inclusion of two brief paragraphs omitted from the first edition, the text of the 1950 first edition has been reissued—as Gurdjieff finalized it in 1949—in the following printings. Adaptations of *Beelzebub's Tales* which were issued in 1992 and 2006, are described in Prologue, footnote 2, page xvii.

- 1950—*All and Everything: Ten Books in Three Series of Which This is the First Series*. [First Edition] New York: Harcourt Brace, 1238 p.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1238 p.

- 1964—*All and Everything: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson. Ten Books in Three Series of Which This Is the First Series.* New York: Dutton, 1238 p.
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- 1963—*Meetings with Remarkable Men.* New York: Dutton, 303 p.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 303 p.
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- 1974—*Meetings with Remarkable Men.* New York: Dutton, 303 p. ISBN 0525472428 (pb).
- 1978—*Meetings with Remarkable Men.* London: Pan Books (Picador), 303 p. ISBN 033025569X (pb).
- 1985—*Meetings with Remarkable Men.* London & New York: Penguin Arkana, 303 p. ISBN 0140190376 (pb).

Printings of *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*

A ten-page omission from the first private English edition was added from the French edition to the second private edition and to all subsequent printings. Publication history for each edition states: "For the preparation of this authorized text, the latest version of the manuscript was used, but all extant versions were consulted."

- 1975—*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am."* Privately printed, New York: Dutton, 1975, 170 p.
- 1978—*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am."* Second edition. Privately printed, New York: Triangle Editions, 177 p. Includes ten additional pages from the French 1976 edition.
- 1981—*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am."* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, 177p, ISBN0710008872 (hc).
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- 1991—*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am."* Viking Penguin, New York, 177 p., ISBN 0670835633 (hc).
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